



POLITICAL AND  
STRATEGIC INTERESTS  
OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM

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POLITICAL AND  
STRATEGIC INTERESTS  
OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM  
*AN OUTLINE*

By a  
Study Group of the (Royal) ✓  
*Institute of International  
Affairs*

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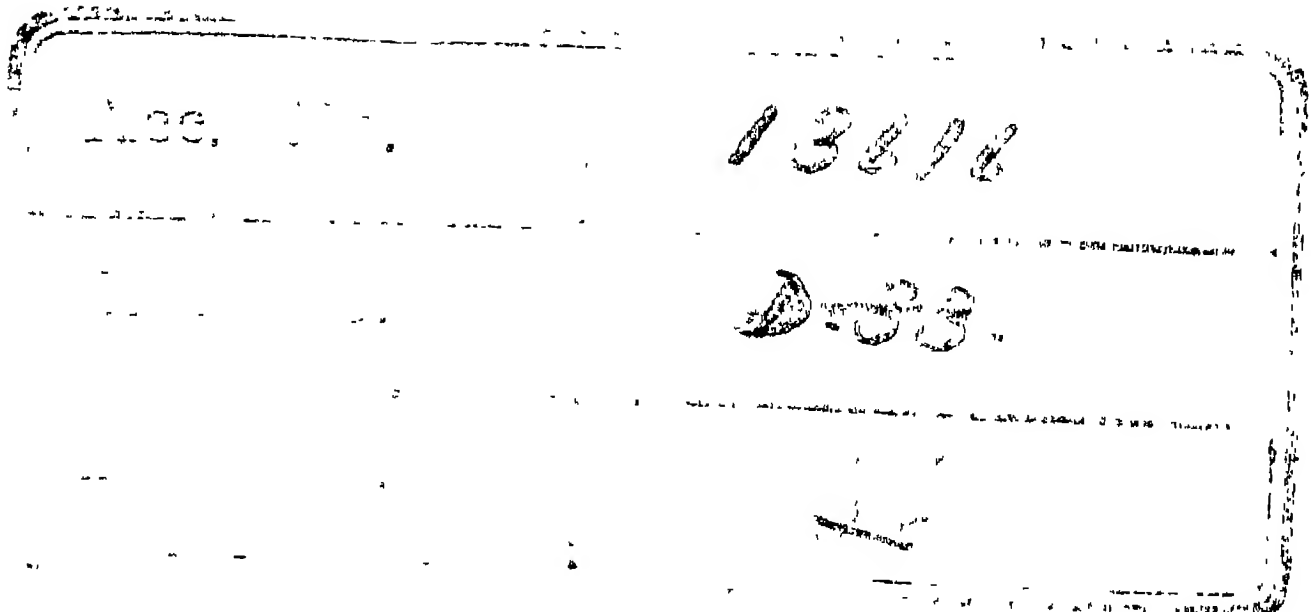
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## FOREWORD

THE following study was in its original form prepared for the use of the members of the Group from the United Kingdom who attended the second unofficial British Commonwealth Relations Conference, held at Sydney in September, 1938. The Conference was conceived and organized by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, and by the Institutes of International Affairs in the Dominions and in India: the Groups attending the Conference, whose members were chosen with a view to giving a cross-section of opinion in each country, were invited by the same bodies, and the preparatory studies demanded by the Conference Agenda were prepared under their auspices.

In order to make clear the circumstances which dictated the form of the present study, it is necessary to describe the scope and character of the documentation requested from each participating country as defined in the Conference Agenda.<sup>1</sup> The Committee, consisting of representatives from each of the participating bodies, which met in London in June, 1937, to determine the arrangements and agenda for the Conference, considered that the problem now before the Commonwealth was 'to attain the maximum of mutually advantageous co-operation among a number of autonomous and equal nations', and that a careful consideration of the national interests of the members of the Commonwealth was 'the most constructive and realistic approach to the examination of the possibilities of co-operation'. As a background to the discussions, the participating Groups were accordingly invited to set out the national interests of their respective countries, with reference to such factors as geographical and strategic position, economic influences, cultural or racial affiliations, present objectives in foreign policy, defence policy and defence requirements. The following study is a curtailed and revised version of the paper submitted to the Conference by the United Kingdom Group in fulfilment of these requirements. The principal alteration, made in order to shorten the book, is the omission of the material on Great Britain's economic interests, which is readily accessible

<sup>1</sup> For further details see *The British Commonwealth and the Future*, Proceedings of the Second Unofficial Conference on British Commonwealth Relations, edited by H. V. Hodson (London, 1939).

in other publications. Other changes have been due largely to developments in international relations since last summer. The publication of the study has been undertaken in response to a number of requests from readers of the original text, who have found in it a useful reminder of the factors which have governed the conduct of the policy of Great Britain in the past and which have to be taken into consideration in any attempt to understand the trend of present-day affairs. It is hoped that as a concise but readable guide the present study may prove of service both to the general reader and the student.

The paper for the British Commonwealth Relations Conference was prepared under the direction of an Editorial Committee, set up by the Council of Chatham House, for the purpose, and constituted as follows :

The Hon. Hugh A. Wyndham (*Chairman*).

Air-Commodore J. A. Chamier, C.B., C.M.G., O.B.E.

Lieut.-General Sir J. R. E. Charles, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

Mr. G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, M.C.

Mr. H. V. Hodson.

Sir John Pratt, K.B.E., C.M.G.

Mr. J. A. Spender.

Mr. Ivor Thomas.

Rear-Admiral H. G. Thursfield.

Mr. R. J. M. Wight (*Secretary*).

The Council wishes to record its gratitude to the members of the Committee for having undertaken this task and for giving so generously of their time and labour, both in preparing the original document and in supervising its revision for publication. The Council was fortunate also in receiving valuable assistance from Mr. Anthony Gray, Mr. Edward Hulton, the Hon. Richard Hare, Mr. C. J. M. Alport and Miss Margaret Lewin, who undertook voluntarily to prepare draft material for the use of the Editorial Committee in producing the original paper. The Council greatly appreciates the services of these voluntary workers, and is glad of the opportunity to record its gratitude to them and also to Sir Kenneth Wigram, who kindly made available to the Editorial Committee certain valuable material of which he was the author. The Editorial Committee desires to associate itself with this expression of gratitude, and also to record its special thanks to its secretary, Mr. R. J. M. Wight, for the able manner in which he

## FOREWORD

vii

discharged his task. The Editorial Committee also wishes to express its thanks to the Secretary and members of the staff of the Study Groups Department of the Institute, who have carried out the work involved in revising the paper for publication.

It should be understood that the members of the Editorial Committee responsible for the preparation of the following report submit it as a useful survey of the subject without necessarily subscribing as individuals to every statement contained in it.

CHATHAM HOUSE,  
10, ST. JAMES'S SQUARE,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

*March 8, 1939.*

ASTOR,  
*Chairman of the Council.*



## INTRODUCTION

THIS book does not aim at describing all the interests of the United Kingdom. Those interests cover a field too wide for a single volume. Even when the subject has been narrowed down to 'political and strategic' interests, it is necessary to apply still further limitations if we are not to be carried into controversies too general to be usefully discussed in a work of this kind. It is urged in many quarters that, quite apart from ethical considerations, it will be found politically and strategically impossible for Great Britain to secure her own advantage or her special interests in the present anarchical condition of the world without concerning herself, first and foremost, with the task of converting this anarchy into order. On this view, the whole-hearted effort to secure some kind of world order is a policy whose pursuit is an interest transcending in importance those special and peculiar interests which differentiate the United Kingdom from the other countries of the British Commonwealth, as well as from the rest of the world. But this argument could be applied, with equal force, to many other countries, and while a study of the special needs of Great Britain may leave out of account some important considerations which should determine British foreign policy, these peculiar interests are none the less sufficiently important and sufficiently extensive to justify a survey of the kind which is here attempted.

It is often maintained, and with an obvious measure of truth, that the first interest of the United Kingdom is peace. It is indisputable that under modern conditions a war in almost any part of the world, especially if a Great Power is involved, must inflict injury upon British financial and commercial interests, and that Great Britain has no ends which could be served by the initiation of war. The British people, law-abiding at home, have a deep-rooted belief in the desirability of establishing a rule of law throughout the world, a belief derived from their own experience of centuries of internal peace, order and equality before the law. For a hundred years—from 1815 to 1914—Great Britain's combination of sea-power and money-power in some degree imposed the characteristics of her internal régime upon world relations: her navy kept open the channels of trade, and her financial power promoted the development of industry and commerce. But in the latter half of the nineteenth century Germany and Italy achieved national unity and, with Japan, rose



to the status of Great Powers. The conditions that made the *pax Britannica* possible ended with the Great War ; in particular, the development of aerial warfare permanently modified the advantages of maritime predominance and an insular situation ; this country therefore took a leading part in the creation of a League of Nations, through which it was hoped to merge her own security in a general régime of security for all nations.

In seeking thus to promote the reign of peace and the rule of law, Great Britain was undoubtedly promoting her own interests. The British stock is dispersed and the English language used and understood throughout the world to a unique degree. Great Britain's interests are spread over every part of the globe ; she is still the largest carrier of the commerce of other nations ; trade with her is important, and often of the first importance, in every country of the world, while her own trade is so widespread that no single one of her customers takes more than 6 per cent. of it, nor does any one country supply more than 12·8 per cent. of her total imports. Four-fifths of her food supplies come from overseas ; one-fifth of the people of the United Kingdom live by her export trade. The total of her oversea investments, in British and foreign countries, is estimated at over £3,700 millions, and in this way, in addition to the trade connexion, her prosperity is closely bound up with theirs. Peace is essential to Great Britain if she is to maintain this position unimpaired.

Nevertheless, the interests of the United Kingdom cannot be summed up in this single phrase—the maintenance of peace. In the first place, it is clear that Britain has many interests which, even in times of peace and settled order, cannot preserve themselves automatically, and many which are of very great importance, though it may be improbable that she would defend them at the cost of war. In the second place, it is clear that she regards some of her interests as of greater importance than the preservation of peace, since she maintains armed forces to protect them, and would use them if the necessity arose.

As a world Power, Great Britain has unique affiliations and unique responsibilities. She is the central member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and she is in addition the ruler of a great dependent Empire ; but she is also an integral part of the European system. This peculiarity in her situation, as the heart of a world-wide Empire and as a small island in intimate proximity to the continent of Europe, imparts to her interests and to her policy that dual character which is its distinguishing feature. As an imperial Power, she has to harmonize her policy with that of the Dominions, whose interests and outlook necessarily differ from hers. They are remote from Europe ; one, Canada, is

bordered by the large and friendly territory of the United States, others are apprehensive of extra-European dangers, and all of them of entanglement in European troubles through the British connexion. The interests of the dependent Empire put further restrictions on British policy. Great Britain accepts her responsibility for the safety of the Dominions and the dependent Empire, and would go to war in their defence. Some of the other commitments which she recognizes, such as her treaties of alliance with Portugal, Egypt, and 'Iraq, though originating perhaps to some extent from other causes, may be looked upon as adjuncts of Commonwealth security, and all, including her obligations to France, Belgium, Poland, Rumania and Greece, bear this aspect indirectly since British security in Europe is a primary requisite of her imperial integrity.

But though she has tried to limit her intervention in European affairs to the minimum consistent with safety and independence, the interests which link her with the Continent are nevertheless of the first importance. To-day less than ever can she afford to remain 'looking through an emerald at others' jarres', and the same principles which have determined her European policy for three centuries remain valid to-day. Firstly, in order to keep open the communications that are essential to her existence, she must maintain her supremacy in the North Sea and the English Channel. Secondly, the preservation of the integrity and independence of the Low Countries is as vital to her own interests and safety to-day as in times past; the advent of air power has emphasized this historic fact, but has not altered it. Thirdly, the threat of any Great Power to dominate Europe by fear of its force must be the concern of Great Britain no less than of the states of the Continental mainland. Actually, all these principles are implicit in the third, since the threat which it envisages would inevitably and immediately arise if a Great Power were to set out to challenge British supremacy in the North Sea and the Channel, or seize control of the Low Countries.

Besides these specific interests in Europe, Great Britain has a general interest in preventing disputes from culminating in hostilities in a region where war is so difficult to localize, and she has constantly exercised in European quarrels those mediatory functions for which her detached position peculiarly fits her. The facilities which it promised for the settlement of disputes by peaceful consultation formed an additional and perhaps predominant motive leading Great Britain to favour and support the establishment of the League of Nations.

The breakdown of the League system has compelled Great Britain to reconsider the methods by which her interests may be

served. This task has been immensely complicated in recent years by the fact that many of the most influential nations of the Continent are actuated by a political philosophy which is not only inherently different from, but also antagonistic to, hers. The law-abiding character of the British people is founded on the principle of liberty. It derives from a right to choose their own form of government and to live under a system of law democratically created. Far more certainly than any menace to particular local interests, would any aggression threatening British liberties be firmly and at all costs resisted. The acceptance of the principle of liberty as the mainspring of political and social institutions is so well established in Great Britain as to have become a habit. Free speech, a free press, free Parliamentary debate, freedom from spying, informing, arbitrary arrest and other despotic action by any superior authority—all this is taken for granted. An infringement of these liberties would be regarded as a denial of elementary rights.

In two great European countries and several smaller ones, the State is founded upon principles which are in strong contrast to this British conception. This difference affects both internal and external policy. Within the State, the régime exalts obedience as the supreme virtue ; the one-party system prevails ; the press is controlled ; regimentation extends to every department of life. In external affairs relative military strengths are regarded as the chief factor in the settlement of differences, and the idea of the rule of law between nations is rejected as an inadmissible invasion of national sovereignty. Moreover, internal regimentation is mainly directed towards military efficiency. The dictator at the head of the State has dispensed with the hampering delays of procedure by parliamentary action. He can organize his nation expeditiously, secretly, comprehensively, and without fear of effective opposition.

The ideological division of Europe is profound and disastrous. It has rendered the League system unworkable and has created, within the democratic nations, divisions between those who desire to bring the nations together by other means now that the League has broken down, and those who hold that there should be no dealing with those Powers which carry to its full logical conclusions the totalitarian ideology. The prejudice of this section of democratic opinion does not indeed extend to all dictatorships, though the number of modern states which have abandoned democracy for totalitarian autocracy is one of the practical difficulties in the way of constructing a genuine *bloc* on ideological lines. Russia must at present be counted a dictatorship, whilst Poland, Rumania, Portugal and Turkey, all Powers inclined to range

themselves with France and Great Britain, are at present nearer to the Fascist than to the democratic type.

The cleavage promoted by anti-Fascist—and indeed anti-Communist—prejudice is therefore a seriously weakening factor in the democratic-libertarian ranks; it seems clear that an ideological conflict of policies is staged on a battle-ground far more favourable to the Fascist-totalitarian forces. For in every State where freedom of speech and of political conviction are allowed to persist, the Fascist ideology inevitably has allies, both those who positively sympathize with that creed and those who support it in preference to an ideology which they fear and detest even more. The democratic state's liberty of thought can thus be exploited by a nation disciplined to a single homogeneous opinion. No doubt public opinion in a democracy may well prove a more solid support to a government in time of war than in a totalitarian State. On such occasions, the great weakness of the latter is that it has no reserves of morale in public opinion, and that the suppressed elements seize the opportunity to attack the régime. Nevertheless, it is incontestable that, in disputes short of war, the totalitarian states find an immense diplomatic advantage in waving the ideological flag.

These considerations give support to the contention of the British government that the interests of the United Kingdom demand that her foreign policy should disregard so far as possible ideological cleavages. The only sound principle for international dealings is that each country is responsible for its own system of internal government and that none will submit to interference by its neighbour in that sphere. In practice the problem of achieving a *modus vivendi* for the democratic and the totalitarian Powers remains, because the most formidable exponents of totalitarian government are, in fact, pursuing an external policy which appears to threaten the interests of Great Britain and of her democratic associates. Their totalitarianism is not really the relevant consideration, except perhaps in one respect. Observing totalitarian methods and, so far as can be judged, their effect upon the general well-being and standard of life, the nations with established democratic traditions have not so far shown any inclination to follow the dictators' example. But it cannot be denied that, in respect of preparation for war, the methods of the totalitarian states present a serious temptation to the free countries. The latter are at a disadvantage in respect of the unquestioning discipline, the secrecy and the capacity for sudden and unexpected action which are assets in war. Indeed, in war-time all states are compelled to adopt many of the features of totalitarianism. For this reason democracies look upon war as an expedient

only to be resorted to in cases of extreme necessity. The State was made for man, not man for the State.

For the totalitarian States, on the other hand, force is the logical *ultima ratio* in a world where the rule of law between states is denied ; and the individual has no rights in opposition to those of the State. The democracies are thus confronted by states whose rulers are apparently prepared to imperil the peace and security of the world in the interests of what they describe as ' their historic destiny ' ; and the democracies have to discover means to meet this challenge without endangering their own liberties.

*March 2, 1939.*

# CONTENTS

## *PART I : FOREIGN POLICY*

### SECTION I : EUROPEAN INTERESTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	GREAT BRITAIN IN EUROPE . . . . .	3
	Geographical position ; strategic principles ; home defence ; strategic unity of the British Isles ; command of the English Channel and the North Sea ; independence of the Low Countries ; Belgian neutrality, 1815-1914 ; post-War status of Belgium ; change in Belgium's foreign policy, 1936-7.	
II.	GREAT BRITAIN AND WESTERN EUROPE TO 1935 .	19
	Historical survey to 1919 ; the period 1919-26 ; Disarmament Conference period, 1926-33 ; attitude of the Powers to German rearmament, 1933-5.	
III.	GREAT BRITAIN AND WESTERN EUROPE SINCE 1935 .	40
	The League and the Italo-Ethiopian War ; the four aspects of British policy towards the dispute ; the altered problem of Western European security ; the Spanish Civil War and the policy of non-intervention ; the Rome-Berlin Axis and British policy ; summary.	
IV.	OTHER EUROPEAN INTERESTS. CENTRAL AND EAST-ERN EUROPE . . . . .	75
	(a) The period 1933-6 ; (b) the rise of Great Germany, 1936-8 ; Scandinavia ; the U.S.S.R.	

### SECTION II : THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST

V.	MEDITERRANEAN INTERESTS . . . . .	100
	Historical survey to 1918 ; Gibraltar ; Malta ; Cyprus ; Egypt and the Sudan ; the Suez Canal ; conflict of interests in the Mediterranean : (a) the British position ; (b) the Italian position ; (c) the French position ; (d) recent diplomatic arrangements.	
VI.	MIDDLE EASTERN INTERESTS : I . . . . .	142
	Palestine : (a) British interests ; (b) Arabs and Jews ; (c) defence and internal security ; Transjordan ; 'Iraq.	



CHAP.	PAGE
VII. MIDDLE EASTERN INTERESTS : II . . . . .	160

Arabia and the Persian Gulf : (a) British interests ; (b) British relations with the Arabian States ; (c) British forces ; Iran ; Afghanistan ; conflict of interests in the Middle East : (a) the Arabs ; (b) the Jews ; (c) the Italian position ; (d) the French position ; (e) the British position ; British imperial communications and Africa : (a) East Africa ; (b) the Cape route to the Indian Ocean ; (c) the air route to the Cape.

### SECTION III : THE FAR EAST ; THE AMERICAN CONTINENT

VIII. THE FAR EAST . . . . .	187
------------------------------	-----

Introduction ; policy of the Western Powers before the War ; the Washington Conference ; policy of the Pacific Powers since the War : (a) Japan ; (b) China ; (c) the Soviet Union ; (d) the United States of America ; the Philippine Islands and U.S. Far Eastern Policy ; British interests ; British forces ; British policy.

IX. THE AMERICAN CONTINENT . . . . .	224
--------------------------------------	-----

The United States of America : (a) the Monroe Doctrine ; (b) British financial and commercial interests ; (c) freedom of the seas and neutral rights ; the Atlantic and the Panama Canal ; Latin America : (a) South America ; (b) Mexico.

### *PART II : IMPERIAL DEFENCE*

X. THE PROBLEM . . . . .	243
--------------------------	-----

The problem stated ; political factors ; interests of the various countries of the Empire and their attitudes ; India's special problems : (a) geographical and political factors ; (b) the military liability ; (c) defence forces and supply ; (d) direction and control ; (e) estimates ; (f) India's part in Imperial Defence ; evolution of air power and its effects ; Imperial air routes and their problems.

XI. MILITARY FORCES AND EXPENDITURE . . . . .	271
---	-----

Rôle, strength, and distribution of the Royal Navy ; Fleet Air Arm ; rôle, strength, and distribution of the land forces of the Empire ; rôle, strength, and distribution of the Royal Air Force ; expenditure on defence.

INDEX . . . . .	297
-----------------	-----

*PART I*

FOREIGN POLICY





# SECTION I

## EUROPEAN INTERESTS

### CHAPTER I

#### Great Britain in Europe

THE English Channel, which separates the British Isles from France on the south, is just over 100 miles wide at the western end, and only nineteen at the eastern end, where it runs into the North Sea. The North Sea, which separates the British Isles from Belgium, Holland, Germany, the Baltic, and Scandinavia, is 190 miles wide at its northern end, the Scandinavian Gap between the Shetlands and Norway. The Irish Sea, which separates Great Britain from Ireland to the west, is twelve miles wide at its northern end between the Mull of Kintyre and Rathlin Island, and just under fifty miles wide at its southern end between Carnsore Point and St. David's Head.

The most important estuary of Great Britain, the mouth of the Thames, faces the mouths of the Rhine and Scheldt less than 200 miles to the east. London, on this estuary, has been for two centuries the greatest port and centre of population in the world. A circle round it of 300 miles' radius includes the whole of England, Wales, and Belgium; almost the whole of Holland; and the principal industrial areas, the capital, and all the northern coast-line of France.<sup>1</sup>

' London, itself, is separated from the coast of Europe by less than one hour's flight, of which at least twenty miles would be across the sea where aircraft could fly with some immunity from observation. Its area is double that of Berlin and three times that of Paris; its population is a much larger part of the total population of the country than is true for these other capitals; it possesses in the Thames an ideal leading-mark for aircraft; its normal sky condition of broken clouds favours an attacking force.'<sup>2</sup>

The Port of London receives a third of the total overseas trade of the island; the diversion of this traffic to other ports would gravely

<sup>1</sup> It also includes, in Ireland, Waterford, Wexford, and all the old-English Pale round Dublin.

<sup>2</sup> D. H. Cole, *Imperial Military Geography* (Sifton Praed, 1936), p. 84.

dislocate the whole distribution and supply system of southern England.

The main industrial areas of England, which stretch in a belt north-eastwards from Cardiff to Tyneside, are mostly within 250 miles of the coast of continental Europe, and nowhere farther than 300. All England south of a line from the Mersey to the Tyne is within range of bombing aircraft from continental European bases ; but that part of the country south of a line from the Severn to the Wash is most liable to attack in event of war.

‘ In this area lies London, the administrative and financial centre, the English Channel, and the approaches to London—Southampton, Bristol, Avonmouth, Dover, and Harwich ; the constructional and maintenance bases at Devonport, Portsmouth, and Chatham, the Government arsenal at Woolwich, the small-arms factory at Enfield, civil engineering and armament factories on the south bank of the Thames, the most important power and transformer stations of the Grid System, the largest reserves of petroleum, and the great military concentrations round Aldershot and Salisbury.’<sup>1</sup>

This geographical position has determined the following general principles of policy and strategy towards continental Europe :

(i) *The Strategic Unity of the British Isles*.—Great Britain seeks to prevent any part of the British Isles, including Ireland, from passing into the control of another Power.

(ii) *The Command of the English Channel and the North Sea*.—She seeks to command the narrow seas separating her from continental Europe, in order to prevent invasion, to control the maritime trade routes, and to ensure thus her own food-supplies from overseas.

(iii) *The Independence of the Low Countries*.—She seeks to prevent the coast of continental Europe opposite the Thames estuary, particularly the mouths of the Scheldt and Rhine, from passing into the control of a hostile Power.

(iv) *The Balance of Power*.—She seeks to prevent any continental European Power from acquiring an undisputed hegemony, which would endanger the independence of the Low Countries and might result in a Continental coalition against her.

Great Britain’s geographical position has also shaped the method of her European policy. In the last resort, she has been able to intervene directly with force in European power-politics only in terms of sea-power.<sup>2</sup> She can have no direct influence upon the interior of continental Europe. She cannot go to war in Central

<sup>1</sup> Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Her other method of intervention is financial power ; see p. 20 below.

and Eastern Europe ; but she can spread an existing war there to Western Europe. Her power can be directly brought to bear only upon the oceanic fringe of Europe ; the Baltic,<sup>1</sup> southern Scandinavia, the north German coast, the Low Countries, France, the Peninsula, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea sea-boards, with which she can have naval communication.

The development of the air weapon has strongly confirmed these aims, particularly the independence of the Low Countries and of France, their freedom from occupation by an enemy, and the maintenance of the Balance of Power. It is of the first importance to Great Britain that advanced bases for hostile aircraft should not be established in Belgium ; and whereas in the past the predominance of a continental Power was a somewhat distant danger so long as the British navy was supreme at sea, the predominance of a continental Power to-day makes a direct and immediate threat to the heart of the Empire. Conversely, the development of air-power has potentially given Great Britain another method of intervention in Continental conflicts.

### *Home Defence*

The distribution of military forces in England has been based upon the assumption of command of the sea, upon which above all the defence of England depends. While Great Britain retains command of the sea, the three purposes of the British Army, both Regular and Territorial, are firstly, the defence of the British Isles against sea-borne and air attack ; secondly, the discharge of British commitments overseas, including the defence of ports on the trade routes ; and thirdly, the provision of a strategic reserve which is being prepared, trained, and equipped to meet the event of war in a European theatre.<sup>2</sup>

Four-fifths of British permanent military strength are concentrated south of the line from the Bristol Channel to the Wash, at Aldershot, on Salisbury Plain, at Colchester and in the vicinity of the Channel ports. These became military stations because they had wide training ground or easy access to ports of embarkation ; but they were chosen before the air weapon was invented, and vulnerability to air attack is their chief defect. For the purposes of training, draft-finding, and reinforcements for garrisons abroad, which are the main functions of the Regular army, they could scarcely be bettered.

<sup>1</sup> Since the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, Great Britain has been left with little means of exerting naval power in the Baltic ; see p. 79 below.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hore-Belisha in the House of Commons, March 10, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 332, cols. 2136-8) ; see p. 280 below, and a further statement on March 8, 1939 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 344, cols. 2161-84).

The Air Force consists of defensive fighters for co-operation with ground anti-aircraft defences, and the more important striking force of bombers, situated chiefly behind the defences but within easy range of Continental bases and arsenals. The distribution of the Air Force is directly determined by the defence of England ; it is designed to protect the south-east and London, the most vital and vulnerable centre, and to cover the industrial areas of the Midlands and north-east coast. It is organized in three operational commands : fighter, bomber, and coastal.

### *The Strategic Unity of the British Isles*

In the last thousand years England has absorbed all the other political units in the British Isles. Wales, which Edward I conquered, was not of international importance, save on the occasion when it became the back-door through which a Welsh pretender invaded England to win the crown in 1485. Scotland became a national enemy through her alliance with France, which lasted from the end of the thirteenth to the end of the sixteenth century. France was able to endanger England's northern border through this connexion until the union of the crowns in 1603 ; and even after the union of the kingdoms in 1707, France and Spain and Sweden hoped to attack England through Scotland by allying themselves with the Jacobite movement. After the failure of the ' Forty-Five ', the most vulnerable part of the British Isles was Ireland, which had been conquered but never reconciled to British domination. The French Revolution promised liberty to the oppressed Irish ; Bonaparte thought of striking at Great Britain through Ireland ; and the attempted invasion of 1796 only narrowly failed. In the Great War, Germany hoped to make similar use of Irish disaffection, and sent arms to Ireland before the Easter Rebellion.

The importance of Ireland to Great Britain is two-fold : the control of Ireland by a hostile Power would be a danger as grave as the control of Belgium by a hostile Power, and the many natural harbours of the Irish coast are valuable bases for the defence of the Atlantic entrances to home waters. Strategical reservations were one of the most important parts of the Treaty of 1921, by which Great Britain recognized the Irish Free State. The Treaty laid down that in time of peace, the Free State should provide for Great Britain the naval anchorages of Berehaven, Queenstown, and Lough Swilly, where Great Britain should retain Admiralty rights and property, control of the defences, and facilities in the neighbourhood for anti-aircraft defence ; in time of war or strained relations with a foreign Power, the Free State should provide such harbour and other facilities as the British government might require.

This control by Great Britain of Irish coastal defences was increasingly resented by the Free State ; although the struggle between the Free State and Great Britain from 1932 to 1938 appeared to centre round economic issues, the strategic issue was more fundamental. Mr. de Valera declared that the independence of the Free State, compared with that of the other Dominions, was limited by three things : the partition of Ireland, land annuities, and the occupation of the Free State's ports by British forces.

' We can't have any real plan of defence while any portions of our territory are occupied by Britain. We have no desire to see our country used in any way as a base for an attack against Britain, but it is impossible to maintain a position of neutrality here while British forces are in our ports. When we get our country for ourselves, then we can organize national defences. If in certain circumstances we are unable to maintain our defences, then in the interests of her own safety Britain would have to give us assistance, which we on our part would be anxious to call for, provided the object of it was to maintain the inviolability of Britain's own territory.' <sup>1</sup>

In the event of war the naval bases would have needed to extend their control far inland, over most of Kerry and Cork and Donegal, and the establishment of such control in the face of an unfriendly or neutral Ireland could not have been accomplished except by the forcible intervention of British troops. The military occupation of a hostile Ireland, and the inevitable effects of such action in the United States, would have crippled Great Britain in a European war.

These considerations played a great part in disposing the British government to conclude the agreement of April 25, 1938, with the government of Eire. Under the terms of that agreement, which also included a trade treaty and a settlement of all outstanding financial claims, the Admiralty property and rights at Berehaven, together with the harbour defences there and at Cork Harbour and at Lough Swilly, were to be transferred to Eire before the end of the year.<sup>2</sup> Mr. de Valera subsequently announced that although there was no secret agreement with Great Britain to that effect, the three ports would be modernized for defence. He also declared that Irish territory would not be used for an attack on Great Britain ; if that declaration affected foreign interests, so much the better.<sup>3</sup> Later he again assured the Opposition that if the Irish government so wished, they were free to let the ports go derelict.

<sup>1</sup> In the Dail, May 19, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5728 (1938)

<sup>3</sup> In the Dail, April 27, 1938.



‘ There are no conditions whatever, either expressed or implied. We could let them go, but we dare not do so. . . . You are going to face new responsibilities, and those responsibilities are going to be a burden to you.’<sup>1</sup>

### *The Command of the English Channel and the North Sea*

English command of the Channel was first won, and its importance first realized, in the Hundred Years’ War. The Battle of Sluys in 1340 ensured that the first part of the War was fought in France and not in England, but at La Rochelle in 1372 England lost command of the Channel, and did not regain it until Henry V built a new navy that made possible his conquest of Northern France. It was his achievement that inspired the classic first account of the necessity of sea-power to England in *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*, which argued that England must be master of the narrow seas both to protect her own trade and to control the foreign trade that passed through the Straits of Dover from the cities of Flanders and the Hanse to France and Spain and the Mediterranean. Such command of the Channel was established by the Tudor Navy, and has not since been lost, save during the Second Dutch War, when de Ruyter sailed up the Medway in 1667 and destroyed the English warships at anchor off Chatham. From the beginning of the eighteenth century Great Britain controlled all the neighbouring waters, and therefore all oceanic access to the Low Countries, Germany, Southern Scandinavia, and the Baltic. But from the middle of that century, when the Industrial Revolution proper and the great increase of population began, sea-power took on a new importance for her ; for it became the guarantee of the imported foodstuffs and raw materials on which her national existence was coming to depend.

Until the end of the nineteenth century England’s greatest European enemies were Spain and France, and the naval defence of the British Isles was concerned above all with the Channel and the threat from the south. As late as 1890 England gave away an outpost position in the North Sea. In 1807 she had seized Heligoland, a tiny Danish island facing the mouths of the Elbe and Weser and the coast of Holstein. In 1890 she had long ceased to consider it important, but it was close to the western end of the Kiel Canal which Germany was building ; Salisbury therefore ceded it to Germany in return for concessions in Africa, and it became a factor in the new German naval strategy.

Germany’s decision at the end of the ’nineties to build a great fleet, strong enough to protect her increasing commerce and colonial empire, ultimately caused a revolution in British naval

<sup>1</sup> In the Dail, April 29, 1938.

policy. In 1902 Britain had ended the long period of her diplomatic isolation by making an alliance with Japan. In its original form the alliance was directed mainly against Russian aggression in the Far East, but when it was renewed in 1905 its chief value to Great Britain was that it enabled her to concentrate her naval forces in Europe. In 1903 the British government decided to create a naval base on the North Sea at Rosyth, which faced the whole arc of the continental European coast from Norway to the Straits of Dover. In 1904 Fisher began to concentrate the fighting strength of the navy in home waters. The navy was at that time divided into the Mediterranean fleet, its main strength, and the Channel fleet; in 1905 it was redistributed in three fleets: the Channel, based on home ports, the Atlantic, based on Gibraltar, and the Mediterranean, based on Malta; and the creation of an Atlantic fleet meant bringing half the Mediterranean fleet out of the Mediterranean. The Anglo-French *entente* of 1904 was not only a settlement of colonial disputes; it was also the means by which Great Britain secured her rear in the south in order to meet the new naval threat from the east. In 1905, Lansdowne authorized direct naval conversations with the French Admiralty. The *entente* resulted after 1912 in a redistribution of the British and French fleets, by which Great Britain could control the North Sea, the Channel, and the Atlantic, and France the Mediterranean. Though neither country had undertaken political commitments, this gave Great Britain the moral obligation of defending the northern and western coasts of France against a German attack.<sup>1</sup> On August 2, 1914, the day before Germany declared war on France, Grey told Cambon that Great Britain would refuse to allow the German fleet a passage through the Straits of Dover in order to operate against the French coast from the Channel. This, wrote Loreburn, 'fixes the date when we were irrevocably committed to war with Germany; for war between France and Germany was then certain, and was declared the next day. It prohibited Germany from using her fleet against French coasts or shipping, without a corresponding prohibition of the use of the French fleet against German coasts or shipping'.<sup>2</sup>

In 1919, Great Britain was resolved to destroy German sea-power and the fortified defences of the 'wet triangle' (between Cuxhaven, Sylt, Heligoland, and the mouth of the Ems); therefore the fortification and harbour works of Heligoland were demolished, the Kiel Canal was thrown open at all times to

<sup>1</sup> ' . . . if the final link in the chain of circumstance, policy, and strategy which gradually bound Britain and France together is to be found at any particular point, it will be found here ' (J. A. Spender, *Great Britain, Empire and Commonwealth* (Cassell, 1937), p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, Vol. III, p. 502.



commerce and warships of Powers at peace with Germany, the German fleet was surrendered and later scuttled by its own crews at Scapa Flow. The status of the Kiel Canal was tested before the Hague Court in 1921, during the Polono-Russian war. On the plea of neutrality Germany refused passage to a British ship, the *Wimbledon*, chartered by a French company to take munitions to Poland. The Court gave a majority ruling that the passage of belligerent warships or merchantmen was not incompatible with the neutrality of the riparian sovereign, and thus assimilated the status of the Kiel Canal to that of the Suez and Panama Canals.

The naval provisions of the Versailles Treaty secured British domination of the North Sea for fifteen years. But in 1935 the German government made the first public demands for, and announcements of, a naval rearmament that had already been proceeding in secret. The British government, which had neither the intention nor the power of enforcing the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty after the failure of the Disarmament Conference, acquiesced in a great measure of German rearmament. France sought security against a rearmed Germany by an alliance with the U.S.S.R.; Great Britain sought it by a bilateral agreement on naval armaments with Germany herself. The Anglo-German Naval Agreement of June, 1935, was the only fruit of the British ministers' visit to Berlin in March. Before the visit Germany had announced a shipbuilding programme including submarines, which the British government regarded as ominous, but she offered to accept 35 per cent. of British naval strength.<sup>1</sup> In June an agreement was concluded to the effect that the relation of German naval tonnage to the aggregate tonnage of the British Commonwealth should be in the proportion 35 : 100, but that Germany should have the right to equal submarine tonnage with the Commonwealth, though undertaking not to exceed 45 per cent. without giving notice.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Germany agreed to renounce the use of unrestricted submarine warfare.<sup>3</sup> There was strong criticism in Great Britain, but the government regarded the agreement as averting the danger of naval rivalry

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay MacDonald in the House of Commons, May 2, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 301, col. 574).

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4953 (1935). In December 1938 the German government notified the British government of their intention to exercise the right to increase their submarine tonnage up to that of the British Commonwealth and to provide themselves with two more cruisers of the "A" class. After discussion of these claims in Berlin the British government asked for a statement in writing of the German government's intentions, which was sent them on January 18, 1939 (see *The Times*, December 31, 1938, and February 3, 1939).

<sup>3</sup> Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell in the House of Commons, June 25, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 303, col. 949).

between Germany and Great Britain and as a step towards universal limitation of naval armaments.<sup>1</sup> So long as it was observed it would make impossible that naval competition between the two North Sea Powers which was a major cause of the Great War. In 1936, the German government began refortifying Heligoland as a submarine and naval air base. Most of the larger Frisian Islands from Borkum to Sylt were also heavily fortified.<sup>2</sup> In July, 1936, the British government admitted that Heligoland was being refortified,<sup>3</sup> but they considered that to raise the matter at that moment might react unfavourably on the negotiations for a general settlement with Germany.<sup>4</sup> Heligoland is too small for a land air base, and the whole of the reconstituted 'wet triangle' can only be a defensive work for the Elbe, Weser, and Ems estuaries.<sup>5</sup> On November 14, 1936, Germany denounced the provisions of the Versailles Treaty for the international regulation of inland waterways, and resumed full sovereignty over the Kiel Canal. The British government made a formal protest.<sup>6</sup> On January 16, 1937, new regulations were issued by the German naval high command, prohibiting the passage of foreign warships through the Canal unless authorization had been previously obtained through diplomatic channels. The British government stated that they were not prepared to take further action.<sup>7</sup>

The chief naval bases of the British Isles were constructed in the south, for war with France. These are the fleet bases at Devonport and Portsmouth, which face Brest and Cherbourg, and the cruiser bases at Chatham and Sheerness, which face the Belgian coast. Lack of adequate bases on the east coast and in the north was felt acutely during the Great War, when the main fleet was based on Scapa Flow and Rosyth; there is now one fleet base on the North Sea, at Rosyth. The naval anchorages at Berehaven and Queenstown flank the Atlantic approach to the English Channel, and Pembroke and Lough Swilly the entrances to the Irish Sea.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell in the House of Commons, June 21, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 303, cols. 706-7).

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, June 17, 1936, *Le Temps*, July 19, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Viscount Cranborne in the House of Commons, July 13, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 314, col. 1640).

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, July 29, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 315, col. 1297).

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, October 17, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, November 16, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 317, cols. 1344-5).

<sup>7</sup> Viscount Cranborne in the House of Commons, January 25, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 319, col. 548).

<sup>8</sup> See pp. 6-7 above.

*The Independence of the Low Countries*

The independence of the Low Countries has been a principle of English foreign policy since the beginning of modern power-politics in the sixteenth century. The Dutch revolt against Spain was of vital interest to Elizabeth's government, because Philip II meant to send Alva's army, after the reduction of the Dutch, to conquer England. The defeat of the Armada was not only the deliverance of England from invasion ; it was also a great blow for Dutch independence. After England had crushed the commercial rivalry of Holland in the next century, Holland became closely dependent upon her, and from 1688 to 1763 the two maritime Powers virtually formed a unit in international policy. In the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13), England fought to defend both Holland and the Spanish Netherlands against the new power of France, whose control of Antwerp and the Rhine delta would have ended the maritime supremacy, and therefore the independence, of England herself. At the end of the War the Spanish Netherlands were given to Austria, an inland State without sea-power ; the great port of Antwerp was closed ; and by the Barrier Treaty of 1715, the Dutch were obliged, no less for British safety than for their own, to maintain and garrison a line of fortresses along the frontier between the Austrian Netherlands and France. In the Austrian Succession War (1740-8) Great Britain fought again to drive the French out of the Netherlands. The decisive cause of her joining the First Coalition against the French Revolution was the French invasion of the Netherlands and the opening of Antwerp and the Scheldt to free navigation ; and one of her chief objectives in continuing the struggle until Waterloo was the determination to force France back into the frontiers of 1792.

*Belgian Neutrality, 1815-1914*

Until Sedan, French policy remained actively concerned with the traditional hopes of the Rhine frontier, and the independence of the Low Countries was an interest that Great Britain shared with Prussia. In 1815 Belgium was joined to Holland, and when this arrangement collapsed in 1830, British diplomacy secured that the independent Belgium passed to a Saxe-Coburg-Gotha instead of to a French prince. In 1839 Palmerston negotiated the London Treaty, which defined Belgium's international status for eighty years. The Treaty was drawn up by the five great Powers—Great Britain, France, Prussia, Austria, and Russia—and imposed upon Holland and Belgium ; it defined the frontiers of Belgium, regulated the navigation of the Scheldt, and declared that Belgium

should be a neutral State. The five Powers gave their guarantee of the whole Treaty to both Belgium and Holland, which might be held to give right rather than an obligation to defend Belgian neutrality.

After the declaration of war between France and Prussia in 1870, Bismarck published the Benedetti draft treaty of 1866, which provided for the French annexation of Belgium. Gladstone immediately sought to reaffirm Belgian neutrality. In 1867 Stanley had held that no new treaty could strengthen the existing guarantees, but Gladstone disagreed. He believed that there was no absolute obligation on a guarantor to act irrespectively of the particular position in which it found itself, but that there was a common interest against the unmeasured aggrandisement of any Power whatever; Great Britain had an interest in Belgian independence wider than that which she had in the literal operation of the guarantee, for Belgium had set an example of stable government and wide liberties, and 'looking at a country such as that, is there any man who hears me who does not feel, that if, in order to satisfy a greedy appetite for aggrandisement, coming whence it may, Belgium were absorbed, the day that witnessed that absorption would hear the knell of public right and public law in Europe?'<sup>1</sup> He therefore obtained from each belligerent a treaty undertaking to join Great Britain in defence of Belgian neutrality against the other; these treaties were to remain in force for one year after the conclusion of peace.

In 1914, the British cabinet did not consider the defence of Belgian neutrality until July 30, and then the cabinet were divided. On July 31, when the Russian mobilization and the German proclamation of *drohende Kriegsgefahr* were reported in London, Grey asked the French and German governments whether they would respect Belgian neutrality, and informed the Belgian government that he assumed they would uphold Belgian neutrality to the utmost of their power. The French and Belgians immediately gave the desired assurances; the Germans, who were bound by the Schlieffen plan, replied evasively. On August 2 Germany sent her ultimatum to Brussels demanding passage for the German armies, and the British cabinet agreed in principle that the violation of Belgium would compel British action. On August 3 King Albert appealed to King George for diplomatic intervention, and Grey's speech won over the great majority of the House to the policy on which his own mind was already made up. In this crisis of British policy, Belgian neutrality was wholly subordinate to the wider issues, the ambitions of Germany and the fate of France. The Gladstonian precedent suggested that the guarantee

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, III, cciii, 1787-8.

of 1839 was not automatic ; but in this case it was not followed, because Great Britain would not have remained neutral even if Belgium had not been violated.

### *The Post-War Status of Belgium*

At the end of the War, Belgium desired to abrogate the neutrality imposed upon her in 1839, which had restricted her right as a sovereign State to make defensive alliances without saving her from invasion. She therefore undertook the obligations of the League Covenant without those reservations concerning military sanctions and right of passage for troops acting under League authority, whereby Switzerland reaffirmed her neutrality ; and the Allies compelled Germany and Austria in the Peace Treaties to consent to the abrogation of the settlement of 1839, though they did not formally do the same themselves.

‘ Of the guarantor Powers, Germany and Austria alone had formally relinquished their right to maintain the 1839 settlement. Great Britain and France might also be held to have waived the 1839 settlement by their acts, at least in so far as the neutrality clauses were concerned. No action had been taken, however, by the fifth guarantor, Russia, and the Netherlands also had retained a free hand. Juridically the position of France and Great Britain was the most obscure. The clearest statement seems to be that made by the Under-Secretary of State in answer to a question in the House of Commons on the 12th April, 1922 : “ These two [Powers] and Belgium are in mutual agreement that, in consequence of past events, the treaty establishing the guarantee can no longer be regarded as in force.” ’<sup>1</sup>

Belgium depended for her security upon France and Great Britain, but she had strong economic ties with Germany. She regarded with anxiety the estrangement between France and Great Britain in the years before Locarno ; a serious breach between the two Powers would have forced Belgium, from her geographical position, into a dangerous dependence upon France, and she therefore became a strong supporter of the League. The post-War status of Belgium was finally defined by two treaties of 1925. In the treaty of April 3, Holland and Belgium recognized the abrogation of the London Treaty of 1839 in so far as it concerned Belgian neutrality ; and this was subsequently approved by Great Britain and France. By the Locarno Treaty of October, the western frontier of Germany was guaranteed severally and

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs for 1920-3* (London, 1925), p. 66.



collectively by Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Italy, and Germany and Belgium undertook not to resort to war against each other. Belgium thus gained a voluntary promise from Germany to respect the *status quo*, and above all a British guarantee, which Monsieur Vandervelde called 'the vital element of our security'.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Change in Belgium's Foreign Policy, 1936-7*

The German repudiation of the Locarno settlement in March, 1935, was a fatal blow to the post-War status of Belgium.

'The demilitarisation of the Rhineland', said Monsieur van Zeeland, 'constituted one of the essential elements of the system for our security, for, in proportion to the forces of the various countries, Belgium has the longest and most exposed common frontier with Germany. Moreover, the Treaty of Locarno was, with the Covenant of the League of Nations, the very foundation of our international status.'<sup>2</sup>

The British government immediately reaffirmed their obligations to Belgium and France under Locarno,<sup>3</sup> and the Belgian government reaffirmed their corresponding obligation to France. Conversations were held between the Belgian, British, and French general staffs, to work out common defensive measures in the event of German aggression before a new western settlement was reached. But during the negotiations for a 'new Locarno' in the latter part of 1936, it became clear that Belgium desired a radical alteration in her status and obligations, and that her aim was above all not to be involved in the quarrels of the neighbouring Powers. The new Belgian policy, which was announced to the world by the publication of King Leopold's speech to the cabinet on October 14, sought to reconcile the desire to avoid war, unless the security of Belgium was threatened, with membership of the League and the realization that Belgian security was organically linked with that of France and Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> The policy was not clarified at once, even in Belgian minds; for a time it seemed possible that Belgium might return to the neutrality of the nineteenth century; but at last there appeared a policy based on these main principles: (i) Avoidance of all commitments which might

<sup>1</sup> *Le Temps*, October 21, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Speech to the League Council in London, March 14, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, March 9, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 309, col. 1812).

<sup>4</sup> The policy of independence was put to the test during the Czech-German crisis of September 1938. In a *communiqué* of September 17 the Belgian government reaffirmed their adherence to the principles announced two years before (*Manchester Guardian*, September 19, 1938).

involve Belgium in conflicts that did not affect her vital interests, or lead to a dangerous dependence upon one Power ; she desired therefore to abrogate her obligations to France under Locarno, and closely to define her obligations under the Covenant ; (ii) Membership of the League : the Belgian government repeatedly denied any intention of abandoning collective security, nor did they make the reservations which determine Switzerland's status as a League member ; but they desired a definition and limitation of the duties under Article 16, emphasizing the phrase *qui participe à une action commune* <sup>1</sup> as the condition for passage of troops through Belgian territory ; <sup>2</sup> (iii) Rearmament : it was the policy of the van Zeeland government to increase to the maximum the nation's power of self-defence, which would deter the aggressor from violating Belgian neutrality, and so contribute to the general security of Western Europe ; (iv) Unilateral guarantees of Belgium by the Western Powers without reciprocal Belgian obligations : it was hoped that although Belgium withdrew her guarantee of France, France and Great Britain would continue their guarantee of Belgium in return for the strengthening of Belgian defences ; it was hoped also to obtain a similar unilateral guarantee from Germany.

The new status desired by Belgium was recognized by Great Britain and France in their joint declaration of April 24, 1937. The two Powers formally noted the determination of the Belgian government to defend Belgium against aggression, to prevent Belgian territory from being used as a passage or base of operations for aggression against a third State, and to organize Belgian defences efficiently for this purpose ; they noted the renewed Belgian assurances of fidelity to the Covenant of the League and its obligations ; and in consequence, taking into account such determination and assurances, they declared that they considered Belgium released from all obligations towards them resulting from either the Treaty of Locarno or the arrangements made in March, 1936, but that they maintained their own obligations towards Belgium.<sup>3</sup>

Belgium was thus released from particular association with any Power, except through her membership of the League ; and her independence and integrity were given a Franco-British guarantee, not through any bilateral contract, but by the unilateral act of the

<sup>1</sup> ' Ils prennent les dispositions nécessaires pour faciliter le passage à travers leur territoire des forces de tout membre de la Société qui participe à une action commune pour faire respecter les engagements de la Société.' The English text reads ' which are co-operating to protect ', which is not a precise equivalent.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, March 12, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, October 14, 1937.

guarantors. This, however, was only a temporary solution ; a new Western pact in which Germany and Italy should co-operate was still needed. Nor was it a precise solution ; Belgium's obligations under Article 16 were left undefined. The Belgian government desired, like Holland, to recognize no automatic obligation in respect of the right of passage through or above her territory of forces acting on behalf of the League ; and this might seriously affect the operation of the British guarantees to France, for the direct air-route between Great Britain and the Rhineland crosses Belgium.

The complementary guarantee of Belgian neutrality by Germany was made on October 13, 1937. The German declaration closely followed the wording of the Franco-British declaration, but the points in which the two documents differed were of the utmost importance. (i) Whereas the Franco-British declaration took note in a general way of Belgian statements of policy, the German declaration noted that the Belgian government ' propose to follow, in full exercise of their own sovereignty, a policy of independence ' ; (ii) Whereas the Franco-British declaration noted the Belgian assurances of fidelity to the League, the German declaration made no reference to them ; (iii) Whereas the Franco-British declaration renewed the guarantee of assistance to Belgium under Locarno, the German declaration stated that Germany would assist Belgium if invaded, in no circumstances would impair Belgian inviolability and integrity, and would at all times respect Belgian territory, ' except, of course, in the event of Belgium's taking part in a military action directed against Germany in an armed conflict in which Germany is involved '.<sup>1</sup>

The German declaration thus emphasized Belgium's independence of Great Britain, France, and the League of Nations, and was at pains to dismiss her obligations under Article 16. The Franco-British guarantee was made conditional on Belgium's loyalty to the Covenant ; the German promise to respect Belgium's inviolability was made conditional on Belgium's failure to fulfil the military obligations of Article 16 against Germany. In a crisis Belgium may have to choose between the Franco-British and the German conceptions of her neutrality. Her government have often pledged themselves to loyalty to the League, but the interpretation of that loyalty remains uncertain. It is Belgium's policy not to commit herself beforehand to any course in the event of German aggression of which she is not the victim ; she frankly seeks to keep out of a European conflict if it is in any way possible ; and the German declaration is an inducement to her to interpret her League obligations as narrowly as possible.

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, October 14, 1937.



After the Franco-British declaration, it was understood that the Belgian government did not preclude staff conversations in order to give effect to the Franco-British guarantee, but intended to avoid political undertakings in regard to them.<sup>1</sup> They have insisted that staff conversations are a question of the national defence policy which was undertaken in sovereign independence, and therefore they will act as they please in the matter. Monsieur Spaak has said that it is a matter to be decided by the military authorities and not by the foreign minister.<sup>2</sup> But this does not solve the problem ; for, if the Franco-British guarantee is to be effective, staff conversations with France and Great Britain would appear to be indispensable.

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, April 26, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, November 2, 1937.

## Great Britain and Western Europe to 1935

*Historical Survey to 1919*

THERE have been two main causes of British intervention in — continental European politics. (i) To preserve the Balance of Power. When medieval Christendom split up into a number of independent sovereign States, the Balance of Power became, and has remained, the principle of their mutual relations. It has been the consistent aim of England to join the opponents of either Spain, France, Prussia, or Austria when one of these Powers aimed at a hegemony of continental Europe, for such a hegemony would endanger the security first of the Low Countries and then of England herself. It is for this reason that she has fought in the four greatest wars of the last four hundred years. It has similarly been British policy to prevent a continental European coalition against her, though such a coalition has never seemed possible except through the hegemony of one Power. (ii) To decide in Europe conflicts of extra-European origin. As Great Britain, Spain, Holland, France, and the German Empire developed overseas commerce and overseas empires, these became sources of dispute on the high seas, in the Mediterranean, in America, in Asia and in Africa, from which Europe could not be insulated. In the last four hundred years, England has fought in more European wars for imperial reasons than for European reasons. Spain was a potential enemy for more than two hundred years after the defeat of the Armada, but the Armada was the last Spanish threat to England in Europe. The first two Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century were wholly commercial; Holland was never a threat to England in Europe. The Anglo-French wars of the eighteenth century were primarily colonial, only secondarily European. In the nineteenth century, though she was no danger to Great Britain in Europe, Russia became a national enemy for imperial reasons, and this inevitably influenced Great Britain's European policy. In the twentieth century, though she is no danger to Great Britain in Europe, Italy may become a potential enemy if she pursues an aggressive policy in the Mediterranean and North Africa, and this has inevitably influenced Great Britain's European policy.

There have been hitherto three chief direct methods of British intervention in continental European politics, determined by Great

Britain's position as a naval and commercial State. (i) The use of naval power : the British navy can be used to destroy the fleets, intercept the shipping, and blockade the ports of the enemy. (ii) The limited use of military power : Great Britain can land an expeditionary force at any point on the continental European coast, communication with which is maintained by her navy. (iii) The use of financial power : Great Britain has subsidized allies and coalitions to fight her enemy on the land. She has ' the tradition of waging continental war with the most lavish expenditure in money, and the greatest economy in human life '.<sup>1</sup>

In the sixteenth century England's greatest enemy was the Spanish Empire. Before the English Reformation, Wolsey endeavoured to hold the Balance of Power between France and Spain ; his policy collapsed at the battle of Pavia in 1525, which had a considerable influence on Clement VII's subsequent refusal to annul Henry VIII's marriage to the Emperor's aunt. After the Reformation, there was a temporary danger that Francis I and Charles V might ally themselves against heretical England, but it was averted by the outbreak of the religious wars in France itself. In Elizabeth's reign, England stood at the point of intersection of the two Catholic groups ; the English navy controlled the communications between Spain and the Spanish Netherlands on the one hand, and between France and Scotland on the other. If the Counter-Reformation had triumphed in France, the Netherlands and Scotland, England would have been encircled. It was therefore England's policy to aid the Huguenots in France, the Dutch rebels in the Netherlands, and the Protestants in Scotland. The Anglo-Spanish religious struggle was exacerbated by the conflict between the growing imperialism of England and the monopolist Spanish Empire in the Indies. In 1588 Philip II sent the Armada to pick up Alva's troops in the Netherlands and carry them across the Channel in a mighty attack upon the centre of Protestant resistance to Catholicism. The defeat of the Armada not only saved England ; it assured the independence of the Netherlands, confirmed Protestantism in Scotland, and began the long decline of the Spanish Empire. English fear of Spanish sea-power persisted, as Mahan pointed out, until the time of Napoleon, long after it had ceased to be a major threat to England ; but the real reasons for the prolongation of Anglo-Spanish enmity were the supersession of Spain by England as the greatest colonial Power, and the association of Spain with France throughout the eighteenth century.

Richelieu's policy in the Thirty Years' War (1618-48), of sup-

<sup>1</sup> C. R. M. F. Cruttwell, *British Strategy in the Great War* (Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 2.

porting Bourbon interests against Hapsburg instead of Catholic interests against Protestant, destroyed all possibility of a renewed attack upon England by the Counter-Reformation, and so enabled the English Revolution to take place without the danger of foreign intervention. In the second half of the seventeenth century, Holland was still a great Power, but she was losing her maritime ascendancy to England and was threatened on land by the France of Louis XIV. Louis conceived French policy in terms of the previous century, and claimed to be the new champion of the Counter-Reformation. By 1688 he had made France by far the greatest Power in Europe ; but the revolution in England in that year substituted the Dutch Stadtholder for the Catholic Stuarts, and aligned England with the anti-French coalition. After the preliminary War of the League of Augsburg (1689-97), a greater war, occasioned by the question of the Spanish Succession, was fought by England primarily to prevent the confirmation of French hegemony through the absorption of the Spanish Empire, particularly the Spanish Netherlands. England for the first time subsidized a grand alliance of German States against France. An English army was landed in the Netherlands, but owing to the genius of Marlborough its most famous victory was won on the banks of the Danube in the heart of Bavaria, the only occasion when an English army has fought a battle in Central Europe. Another English army was landed in Spain, and fought the French in Catalonia. The union of France and Spain was eventually prevented ; but of even greater importance for Great Britain was her gain of undisputed maritime and colonial supremacy as a result of the war.

The three wars which England fought between 1713 and 1789 were for the consolidation of this maritime and colonial supremacy; her European policy became ancillary to the building of an empire in India and America. There was a persistent fear, under George I and George II, that England would be 'steered by the Hanoverian rudder', and that her interests overseas would be sacrificed through entanglement in German *Kleinstaaterei*. But the colonial war with Spain and France was linked to the War of the Austrian Succession only through the French threat to the Netherlands, and in the Seven Years' War (1756-63), Pitt 'conquered Canada upon the plains of Germany'. By subsidizing Frederick the Great against the French in Europe, and sending a British army to fight at Minden, he enabled Wolfe and Clive to conquer Canada and India, and prevented the continental European coalition against England that would have followed the collapse of Prussia. In the War of American Independence, Great Britain continued the struggle with France and Spain

all over the world save in Europe, for she could find no ally there.

The nineteenth century may be called the classic period of British foreign policy. From 1805 to 1900 Great Britain had supreme and undisputed control of the sea, and her power and liberty of action were therefore at a maximum. The war of 1792-1815 is the classic example of British participation in European war, before war had developed from an instrument of policy into the conflict of total national resources. In this instance, as in the general wars a hundred years earlier and a hundred years later, the European issue was paramount. England was brought into the First Coalition by the French conquest of Belgium ; she sent an expedition to the Netherlands, which was decisively beaten ; she created and subsidized four more coalitions against France ; after winning command of the sea at Trafalgar she undertook the blockade of the whole coast-line of continental Europe ; and she landed armies in the Peninsula which became an essential factor in the defeat of France.

This war foiled the last French attempt to dominate Europe by force of arms, and left Great Britain the greatest Power in the world, because the only world-Power. The other claimant to such a title, before the creation of the new French and German empires overseas after 1870, was Russia, who took France's place, in British eyes, as the chief rival. But this was a Mediterranean and Asiatic rivalry, centring round Constantinople and Afghanistan. In Europe, England could take a more isolationist policy than ever before ; until the building of the German navy, she could insulate the rest of the Continent (except on the Russian land frontier) by sea-power, and the European wars and revolutions of the nineteenth century remained internal to continental Europe.

As early as the Vienna Congress, the necessity to maintain the Balance of Power brought Britain and France together against Russia, Prussia, and Austria ; France no longer threatened British supremacy at sea, and her weakness in face of the three eastern Powers was a danger to Great Britain. The rapprochement was strengthened by the common liberal ideals of the western Powers in contrast to the despotism of the eastern Powers. In regard to the Eastern Question Great Britain and France had the same interests in opposing Russia, and in the Crimea they were allies for the first time since Marlborough had learnt warfare under Turenne. This was the only occasion that British troops fought in Europe in the hundred years between Waterloo and Mons. In regard to the Italian question, Great Britain and France both supported the ambitions of Piedmont. British suspicions of



French policy, however, were slow to disappear ; they were encouraged by the ambitions of Louis Philippe in Belgium and his support of Mehemet Ali in Syria, and even more by the restless diplomacy of Napoleon III. Although the old fear of France in Europe and the Mediterranean died at Sedan, new causes of friction arose from the development of the French empire overseas at the end of the century ; there were disputes over Egypt and the Sudan, West Africa, and Siam ; and at the end of the century there were still possibilities of Anglo-French imperialist quarrels throughout the world. These were prevented by increasing British fear of Germany. The unanimous hostility to Great Britain of the continental European Powers during the Boer War was the nearest they have ever come to a spontaneous coalition against her ; this threat, and her ever-growing commitments overseas, combined to make Great Britain desire to end her diplomatic isolation and find a European ally. After the failure of Chamberlain's attempts to make an Anglo-German alliance, the rapid expansion of the German navy was inevitably regarded as a threat to England ; she secured an important ally in the Far East by the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902, and soon afterwards made terms with her two traditional enemies, France and Russia.

The Anglo-French Entente of 1904 was formally no more than a settlement of colonial differences ; but the effect, in a Europe divided between the Triple and Dual Alliances, was to range Great Britain with the latter. The British government began to consider the possibility of a European war in which Great Britain would be involved ; and Anglo-French co-operation developed naturally from the common fear of Germany. Lansdowne authorized indirect military conversations in 1905. In 1906, during the crisis that led to the Algeçiras Conference, Cambon asked Grey for direct military conversations ; Grey authorized them after consulting Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, and Haldane, but not the whole cabinet, and emphasized that they would not commit either government to action. In 1907 England signed a convention with Russia settling the colonial disputes between them, which ' had the effect of combining the Franco-Russian Alliance and the Franco-British *entente* in a higher unit of co-operation '.<sup>1</sup> In 1912, England made the agreement with France regarding the disposition of fleets which finally bound her to her allies.<sup>2</sup>

Though the Great War was on an unprecedented scale, Great Britain's part in it did not differ in kind from her part in the Spanish Succession or the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars ; but in this instance she shared her rôle with the United States.

<sup>1</sup> R. C. K. Ensor, *England 1870-1914* (Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 402.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 9 above.

Great Britain and the United States helped the Allies with loans. The B.E.F. played a more important part than the British armies in previous wars ; in 1914 it had an importance far greater than its size warranted, and in the latter years of the War it came to represent a much larger proportion of total British man-power than had ever fought in Europe before. British naval supremacy was all-important ; it made possible the blockade of Germany, which provided the conditions for military victory, the various ' side-shows ' in the Balkans and the Near East, and the intervention of the United States Army in sufficient strength to end the war in 1918.

At the Peace Conference of Paris, Great Britain, in keeping with her political traditions and her geographical position of semi-detachment from Europe, followed a course mid-way between the idealism represented by President Wilson and the ' Carthaginian ' policy desired by the French. She procured in several cases a mitigation in favour of the Central Powers of the territorial settlements in Europe, but not of the terms relating to the German fleet and colonies. She played a leading part in establishing the League of Nations, devoting particular attention to its organization as a regular conference and centre for international technical co-operation. The British attitude was that ' it is only possible to establish an organization which may make peaceful international co-operation easy and hence customary, and to trust in the force of custom to mould opinion '.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, although the British delegation was instrumental in having those clauses inserted in the Covenant which provided for possible coercive measures, it rejected the French proposals for an international general staff and army. The net, though not of course the intended, result was that Great Britain on the one hand did not succeed (as she had succeeded in 1815) in making the treaty acceptable to the beaten foe, but on the other hand prevented the establishment of machinery to maintain the provisions by force.

### *The Period 1919-26*

French opinion after the War was governed by the desire for the restoration of material losses and for security on the eastern frontier. In 1919 there were three proposals for guaranteeing the latter. The first, advocated in the French press but never proposed officially, was for the dismemberment of the Reich into its component States ; the second was for the creation of an independent Rhineland republic to separate Germany from France. Great

<sup>1</sup> Official British Commentary on the League of Nations Covenant ; Cmd. 151 (1919), p. 12.

Britain and the United States opposed these suggestions, partly because of their political imprudence and the dangerous ascendancy they would have afforded to France, and partly because they would have destroyed Germany's economic system and made her incapable of paying reparations. France was therefore persuaded to be satisfied with demilitarization of the Rhineland, and its temporary occupation, added to the third proposal, namely, for guarantees of the eastern frontier by the United States and Great Britain. Treaties providing for these guarantees were signed on the same day as the Treaty of Versailles ; but since each guarantee was to depend upon the ratification of the other, the British treaty was invalidated when the American Senate refused to ratify the United States treaty ; and the British government declined at that time to take up the guarantee alone.<sup>1</sup> France had surrendered the frontier to which she considered victory entitled her, in return for an alliance with the United States and Great Britain, which never in fact came into operation.

This was the original cause of the estrangement between Great Britain and France from 1919 to 1925 ; and it led directly to the formation of the French alliances with Poland and Czechoslovakia and the French patronage of the Little Entente, as an alternative guarantee of French security. In 1921 Briand asked if Great Britain would renew the guarantee without the United States, and negotiations were begun ; but Great Britain would not guarantee the frontiers of Eastern Europe, and without that her guarantee of the French frontier now meant little to France. The estrangement was furthered by the apparently incompatible promises given by the British to the French and Arabs during the War, concerning the future of Syria ; but it was the French search for a security which Great Britain would not guarantee that determined the international relations of Eastern as well as Western Europe until Locarno, and underlay the divergences of French and British policies towards Poland and the U.S.S.R. as well as towards Germany. Early in 1920 the German government sent troops into the demilitarized zone to suppress a rising in the Ruhr ; the French, without consulting Great Britain, at once occupied Frankfurt and Darmstadt, and provoked a sharp protest from Curzon which Cambon called the ' most painful and serious ' communication in his twenty years' experience at the London embassy. At the San Remo Conference the French and British joined issue over the way in which reparations were to be paid ; and the French occupation of the Ruhr basin brought the Anglo-French disagreement to a head. British opinion found expression in Ramsay MacDonald's letter to Poincaré of February 21, 1924 :

<sup>1</sup> Bonar Law in the House of Commons, November 21, 1919.



‘ It is widely felt in England that, contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, France is endeavouring to create a situation which gains for it what it failed to get during the Allied peace negotiations. . . .

‘ . . . Our security on land and sea remains unmenaced. But our economic existence has been gravely endangered, owing, not to the inability of Germany to pay a certain sum in reparation, but to the acute and persistent dislocation of the markets occasioned mainly by the uncertainty in the relations between France and Germany, the continued economic chaos in Germany shown so clearly by the violent fluctuations in the value of currency, and the ultimate uncertainty in the relations between France and ourselves. Thus it has come about that the people in this country regard with anxiety what appears to them to be the determination of France to ruin Germany and to dominate the Continent without consideration of our reasonable interests and future consequences to European settlement ; that they feel apprehensive of the large military and aerial establishments maintained, not only in Eastern, but also in Western France ; that they are disturbed by the interest shown by your Government in the military organisation of the new states in Central Europe ; and, finally, that they question why all these activities should be financed by the French Government, in disregard of the fact that the British taxpayer has to find upwards of £30,000,000 a year as interest upon loans raised in America, and that our taxpayers have also to find large sums to pay interest on the debt of France to us, to meet which France has herself as yet neither made nor propounded, as far as they can see, any sacrifice equivalent to their own.’ <sup>1</sup>

The occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 inspired constructive attempts by the British government to regulate the relations of France and Great Britain between themselves and with Germany. The Dawes Conference in 1924 made a settlement with regard to reparations. The Geneva Protocol, which offered a general settlement with regard to security by means of a strict interpretation and reinforcement of the guarantees of the Covenant, fell to the ground after the change of government in 1924 ; in its place, as a result of the offer by the German government of a general pact guaranteeing the frontiers of Western Europe, the Locarno agreements were concluded. The British and Italian guarantee to Germany was to prevent any future French action like the occupation of the Ruhr basin ; the identical guarantee to France and Belgium was to provide the security against German aggression

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, March 3, 1924.

which France had not been given in 1919. Austen Chamberlain described the Locarno Pact as 'the real dividing-line between the years of war and the years of peace'. The settlement was confirmed by the admission of Germany to the League of Nations in 1926, as a permanent member of the Council.

*The Disarmament Conference Period, 1926-33*

The Preparatory Commission of the Disarmament Conference, which met for the first time in 1926, showed that the French desire for security was not appeased, and that Great Britain would undertake no further commitments to satisfy it. The Briand-Kellogg Pact of 1928 aroused no opposition because it involved no commitments, and consequently it did not contribute to security. French policy insisted that the limitation of armaments was secondary to the attainment of security, and sought a system of collective defence, by the international supervision of armaments and the creation of an international police force. British policy opposed such infringements of national sovereignty as being inapplicable in a world in which national sovereignty is still the ruling factor, and relied on the friendly co-operation and good faith of other Powers. On the Preparatory Commission differences of detail appeared, showing contrasted conceptions of military requirements and of security, especially in regard to naval armaments, which the French considered scarcely at all save as the means of transport of troops from North Africa to Europe. The French wanted limitation of war potential of every kind; the British held that it was wholly impracticable to discuss so vast a subject. The French wanted limitation of man-power to be restricted to troops with the colours; the British wanted the inclusion of trained reserves. The French wanted limitation of naval armaments by aggregate tonnage; the British wanted limitation by categories. When the British deposited a draft convention, the French immediately deposited an alternative. France refused to attend the Three-Power Naval Conference in 1927, because it sought the separate limitation of naval armaments by regional agreement. The same year, the French and British agreed to a compromise; the French accepted naval disarmament by categories (with the exemption of surface craft of under 10,000 tons with only 6-inch guns), and the British accepted the exemption of trained reserves from limitation. The agreement was published tactlessly, and did not survive the condemnation of the United States and Italy, whose views it ignored. At the London Naval Conference of 1930 another compromise was made, combining the system of naval limitation by aggregate tonnage with that by categories; but the treaty was

divided into two parts, one of which France and Italy would not accept. At the end of that year, after the Nazi representation in the Reichstag had leapt in September from 12 to 107, it was thought to show a Franco-British rapprochement when the British representative on the Preparatory Commission refrained from voting against French proposals in the draft convention. It is more likely that he desired by a conciliatory attitude to achieve the largest measure of agreement before the Commission dissolved.

The French hegemony of Europe was temporarily enhanced, before it came to an end, by the economic depression :

‘ . . . in 1931 the dominance of France had grown far beyond the limits of that old-fashioned military dominance, within the narrow bounds of the smallest of the Continents, which the English-speaking Powers had left to France in the peace settlement as a consolation prize. In 1931, France was the dominant military Power in Europe in the air as well as on land ; she was executing a naval programme—in submarines, destroyers, and cruisers—which was causing uneasiness to the Admiralty in Whitehall. Above all, she had extended her potency in the field of international finance. In 1931, the Bank of England was shocked to find itself dependent on the Bank of France, and the Federal Reserve Bank to find itself not altogether independent of French goodwill, notwithstanding the excess of American over French accumulations of gold.’<sup>1</sup>

This economic domination was brought to an end by the devaluation of sterling, though the prestige of the gold-standard franc remained until it became plain that the deflation necessary to maintain it was ruinous to France ; political domination did not long survive the accession to power of the National Socialists in Germany, in January 1933.

The Disarmament Conference opened in February, 1932. The technical discussions were overshadowed throughout by the German demand for equality of status with regard to armaments. This had become increasingly insistent, as nationalism grew stronger within the Weimar Republic. It was now the obverse of the French desire for security, which was logically incompatible with it so long as Great Britain would not undertake further European commitments. There was general disappointment with the insubstantial resolution passed in July, and Nadolny declared that Germany’s future collaboration ‘is only

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs for 1931* (London, 1932), pp. 21–2.

possible if the subsequent work of the Conference is based on a clear and definite recognition of the equality of rights between nations'.<sup>1</sup> Inconclusive conversations on this matter followed between the French and German governments, which were encouraged by Great Britain. In September the German government withdrew from the Conference until its demands should be met. The British government thereupon issued a statement of policy, deploring that such a political controversy should have arisen at a time when it was necessary to concentrate upon restoring the productive and commercial prosperity of the world, but declaring that Germany was not legally entitled to the abrogation of Part V of the Versailles Treaty by any disarmament convention to be concluded, or by failure to conclude such a convention.

'If the preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles is looked at, it will be seen that the Allied Powers, in requiring these limitations on Germany's armaments, had in mind the object or reason therein indicated. That object or reason was to "render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations". To state what the object or aim of a stipulation is, is a very different thing from making the successful fulfilment of that object the condition of the stipulation.'<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the statement continued, the government realized the force of the contention that German disarmament was intended to be the precursor of general disarmament; and they were earnestly promoting such disarmament, which would tend in the direction of greater equalization. 'I aimed', said Sir John Simon later, 'at getting rid of a series of merely legal propositions in order to insist that the principal issue is a moral and not a legal one';<sup>3</sup> and he defined the traditional and unobtrusive methods by which the government hoped to remedy the situation: 'The thing that is really important is to bring the best possible friendly suggestion to a common discussion for the purpose of bringing Germany, France, Italy, America, ourselves and the smaller States round the table again to apply the principles of disarmament which I have announced.'<sup>4</sup>

In December, at a conference between Germany, France, Italy, the United States, and Great Britain, a resolution was

<sup>1</sup> At the General Commission of the Conference, July 23, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, September 19, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, November 10, 1932 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 270, col. 543).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, col. 548.

passed that granted Germany 'equality of rights in a system that would provide security for all nations'.<sup>1</sup> This formula satisfied both Germany and France, and Germany returned to the Conference at the end of January, 1933.

In the meantime the National Socialist Revolution had begun in Germany; and in February, as a result of the Assembly's adverse vote upon her campaign in Manchuria, Japan gave notice of her resignation from the League.

When the Disarmament Conference resumed in January, it had before it the second French plan, which proposed an elaborate system of collective security. The British delegation suggested that a convention should be drafted giving effect to four principles: that the European States should agree not to resort to force; that the continental European States should seek to arrange regional security agreements; that the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty should be replaced by a new convention; and that there should be qualitative equality of war material, to be achieved by degrees. Mr. Eden stated that the British government had abandoned the ambitious ideal of a universal effort towards mutual assistance; they felt that groups of nations should devise regional agreements similar to the Locarno Pact; Great Britain could undertake no commitments beyond Locarno.<sup>2</sup> But with regard to air armaments Britain emphasized the disadvantage of regional pacts; it was necessary to establish the control of civil aviation in order to make effective the limitation or suppression of naval and military aviation.<sup>3</sup> In March, Ramsay MacDonald proposed a plan, whose provisions for security were an agreement by the Powers to consult in case of a breach of the Kellogg Pact, and the condition that unanimity of the great Powers should be necessary for a decision. He said in the House of Commons that the plan had two main features: the suggestion of definite figures for national armaments, and practical proposals for giving effect to the equality of status pledge to Germany; no nation could remain bound by obligations which it considered inconsistent with its honour, and the British plan proposed to substitute voluntary obligations for Germany.

The British plan was eclipsed by Signor Mussolini's proposal of a European Four Power Pact, in order to regularize beforehand the situation foreshadowed by the approaching failure of the Conference and the illegal rearmament of Germany by the Nazis. The four western great Powers, acting apart from the League,

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, December 12, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> At the General Commission of the Conference, February 3, 1933.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Eden at the Bureau of the Conference, February 9, 1933.



would impose their policy on the lesser Powers ; they would undertake a territorial revision of the treaties ; when the Conference broke down, Germany would be granted equality of armaments, to be attained by stages ; and the colonial claims of Italy and Germany might be considered. Mr. MacDonald and Sir John Simon went to Rome, and gave their support, with certain reservations, to the Italian project. Territorial treaty revision in Germany's favour, however, meant not the *Anschluss*, which Italy would not allow, but a threat to the frontiers of Poland and Czechoslovakia ; and there were immediate protests against the pact in the Little Entente, Poland, and France. On April 1 the British produced an alternative draft, in which the recognition of the sanctity of treaties was emphasized as the complement of treaty revision. In a despatch to the British Ambassador in Rome Sir John Simon said : ' The proposed agreement should in no sense be regarded as a substitute for, or as set in opposition to, the Covenant of the League.' <sup>1</sup> The opposition of the Little Entente and France to the Italian plan was sufficiently strong to secure a modification of its essential features. In the final text the four Powers agreed to co-operate within the framework of the League ; to consider methods of giving effect to Articles 10, 16, and 19 of the Covenant ; to consult together if the Disarmament Conference was unsuccessful ; and to co-operate in restoring the economic stability of Europe. Thus deprived of its original importance, the pact was signed in June. The British government emphasized that it implied no further extension of obligations in European affairs.

Germany was the main opponent of the British disarmament plan, which proposed the standardization of continental armies on a short-service system. She now wished to keep the long-service professional army imposed upon her by the Versailles Treaty. In May, however, she abandoned her opposition to the British plan, and it was accepted as a basis for discussion before the Conference adjourned in July. But nothing had yet been done to satisfy the French desire for security ; and the British agreed that the Nazi revolution, the rearmament of Germany and her threatening attitude to Austria, had created a new situation. France would not disarm without guarantees against German rearmament, and wished to see the international supervision of armaments put to the test, in its application to a country where it was high treason to give information about the preparations for war, before she accepted it as an element of security. Hence the French proposal, supported by the British, for

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, April 13, 1933 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 276, cols. 2819-22).

disarmament by two stages. During a 'probationary' period of four years, the system of supervision was to be tested, while continental armies were standardized on a short-service system, and there was to be no rearmament by Germany and no reduction of armaments by other Powers. In a second period of four years, provided the first period had established confidence, there would be disarmament on a basis of complete equality. When the Conference was resumed on October 14, these proposals were put forward by Sir John Simon on behalf of Great Britain, France, the United States, and Italy.

The same afternoon the German Foreign Minister telegraphed to Mr. Henderson that it was now clear that the Conference would not fulfil its sole object, namely, general disarmament; that this failure was due solely to the unwillingness of the highly-armed States to carry out their contractual obligation to disarm; that this made impossible the satisfaction of Germany's recognized claim to equality of rights, and the condition on which Germany had agreed to rejoin the Conference at the beginning of the year thus no longer existed; on that Germany was accordingly compelled to leave the Disarmament Conference.<sup>1</sup> The withdrawal of Germany from the League of Nations had already been published in Berlin.

This was the beginning of the open division of Europe into opposing *blocs*, through the failure of the attempt to reconcile France and Germany. It was the constant aim of British policy to prevent such a division, and for that reason Great Britain had signed the Locarno Treaty and supported the Four Power Pact. In the House of Commons in November, Sir John Simon said that the central issue was to reconcile German claims with French fears, and that Great Britain would continue the attempt at reconciliation whether Germany were at Geneva or not; the first principle of British policy was neither isolation nor alliances, but mediation by supporting the League. 'We have an immense moral authority to assert, for Britain has disarmed and has a right to speak. We seek to use that authority in the only way open to us, by making no special or select alliance with or against any Power, but by working for friendship and peace between all.' But British obligations under the Locarno Treaty would not be ended by Germany's withdrawal from the League.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Attitude of the Powers to German Rearmament, 1933-5*

The Disarmament Conference survived the German withdrawal by only five weeks. On November 21 Great Britain,

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4437 (1933).

<sup>2</sup> November 7, 1933 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 281, col. 59).

France, Italy, and the United States agreed that the discussions of the Conference should be replaced by 'parallel and supplementary' negotiations through diplomatic channels; and the Bureau and the General Commission were adjourned accordingly. 'We shall never get anywhere', said Sir John Simon, 'unless we try to look inside the German mind and understand Germany's feelings'; the adjournment of the Conference did not mean the adjournment of the work for disarmament; the diplomatic conversations should in the first place be bilateral; the choice before the world was between regulated and unregulated armaments, and the whole weight of British opinion would be thrown on the side of the regulation of armaments.<sup>1</sup>

Within three months of the German withdrawal, the British concluded that since German rearmament was inevitable, it should be formally permitted. In October Sir John Simon had said that a disarmament convention could not begin with rearmament;<sup>2</sup> in November he implied that the choice was between regulated and unregulated rearmament.<sup>3</sup> This caused great bitterness in France. In December, Germany offered France a pact of non-aggression for ten years, and demanded a short-term *Reichswehr* of 300,000 men, fully equipped with all 'defensive' weapons; she accepted a uniform system of supervision, but rejected the 'probationary' period for testing it. France rejected these proposals. After consultation with the Italian government, the British government published a memorandum in January, 1934, containing a compromise between the French and German demands.<sup>4</sup> It urged an agreement not only not to rearm but also to reduce existing armaments; to increase security, it suggested consultation in case of a breach of the Disarmament Convention; it offered considerable concessions to Germany in regard to the size and equipment of her army; in regard to military aircraft, which most touched British security, it required the continuance of the Versailles prohibition for two years, while an attempt was made to secure universal abolition; the return of Germany to the League of Nations should be an essential condition of agreement. Sir John Simon said that these proposals were based on two propositions: that Germany's claim to equality of rights ought not to be resisted, and that it was impracticable for all nations to abandon the weapons which the Treaty of Versailles denied to

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, November 24, 1933 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 283, cols. 429-30).

<sup>2</sup> Statement to the Bureau of the Disarmament Conference, October 14, 1933; broadcast speech, October 17, 1933.

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, November 24, 1933 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 283, col. 435).

<sup>4</sup> January 29, 1934; British White Paper, Cmd. 4498 (1934).



Germany; therefore some rearmament must be allowed to Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Eden visited Berlin, Rome, and Paris to urge the acceptance of the British proposals, and found the German government conciliatory; but their chief effect was to increase the tension between Great Britain and France. In March the French submitted a memorandum to the British government which emphasized that disarmament was impossible without political guarantees of security: ' . . . is an engagement to consult in the case of a violation of the convention sufficient to ensure the rectification of an established failure to observe the convention? The French government does not think so.'<sup>2</sup> But German patience had already reached its limit; and the increased German estimates for military expenditure at the end of March removed any French inclination to be conciliatory.<sup>3</sup> The diplomatic negotiations ended, and the British refused to make a new effort to end the deadlock.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Baldwin announced that the government were already doing the preliminary work for the rapid expansion of the Air Force.<sup>5</sup>

When the Conference was resumed in May there was an open clash between the French, who held that security was prior to disarmament, and the British, who wanted agreement on some measure of disarmament apart from agreement on guarantees of security. France was supported by the U.S.S.R., the Little Entente, Turkey, and the Balkan *bloc*; Great Britain by the United States. The 'neutral' States, Denmark, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, had tried to make a compromise in a memorandum insisting on substantial measures of disarmament combined with 'a reinforcement of security going beyond the proposals of the British memorandum, particularly as regards concrete and definite guarantees for the execution of the convention'.<sup>6</sup> Sir John Simon said that a bridge must be built between the French and German points of view, for an agreement on armaments necessarily involved German participation; as to security, even the Protocol of 1924 was not to come into force until an agreement on disarmament had been reached; it was no use signing security pacts which you were not going to keep

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, February 6, 1934 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 285, cols. 991-2).

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum of March 19, 1934; *The Times*, March 24, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> French Memorandum of April 17, 1934; British White Paper, Cmd. 4559 (1934).

<sup>4</sup> Sir John Simon in the House of Commons, May 18, 1934 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 289, col. 2115).

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons, May 18, 1934 (*ibid.*, cols. 2140-1).

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum of April 14, 1934; British White Paper, Cmd. 4559 (1934).

(though Great Britain would observe her obligations under Locarno) ; the Conference might conclude agreements in a limited field, on such matters as chemical warfare, budgetary publicity, and the creation of a permanent disarmament commission.<sup>1</sup> Barthou replied in a speech that bitterly attacked British policy. He said that the reduction of armaments was not possible until national security was assured ; countries hitherto protected from attack by their geographical position thought of security in terms of averting the new menace of aerial attack, but France had to consider the danger of land attack as well. Sir John Simon had said in October that no agreement on disarmament could permit Germany immediately to rearm ; was this principle invalid because Germany had left the Conference ? Was Germany to be ' present by her very absence ', so that she should have all the rights and none of the duties, and should impose her will on the Conference and the League by preventing agreement ? Sir John Simon had admitted that the memorandum of the five ' neutral ' States went farther in asserting the need for security than the British government ; ' it was not necessary to go a very long way in order to go somewhat farther as regards security than the memorandum of January 29 '.<sup>2</sup> On June 11, having set up four committees, the General Commission adjourned *sine die*.

France was now resigned to the realization that her security was not to be found in a British guarantee of the Versailles frontiers throughout Europe, and sought it instead by the promotion of an Eastern European security pact and by the entry of the U.S.S.R. into the League. These objects received British approval. At the same time uneasiness was increased by the actions of Germany ; Nazi terrorism, which shocked European opinion on June 30, was seen as a graver menace when the Chancellor of a neighbouring State was murdered on July 25. Mr. Baldwin referred to these events when he announced in the House of Commons that the government had decided on rearmament in the air. He said that they could no longer delay increasing the Air Force to a strength nearer that of Great Britain's neighbours ;<sup>3</sup> Great Britain would be incapable of co-operation in collective security without this increase ; it need not prejudice the future of the Disarmament Conference, but years were required for it and it must begin now ; moreover, it would be a powerful deterrent to an aggressor. ' Let us never forget this ; since the day of the air, the old frontiers are gone. When you think of the defence of England you no longer

<sup>1</sup> Statement before the General Commission, May 30, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, July 19, 1934 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 292, cols. 1273-5).

think of the chalk cliffs of Dover ; you think of the Rhine. That is where our frontier lies.' <sup>1</sup>

In Western Europe, the relations of France and Germany in the six months after the breakdown of the Disarmament Conference centred upon the Saar plebiscite. Herr Hitler said that this was the only territorial question which separated Germany from France.<sup>2</sup> But the activities of the Nazis in the Saar made it difficult for the Governing Commission to ensure a fair and peaceful vote. In December Mr. Eden announced before the League Council that the British government considered it better to prevent disturbances before they arose than to suppress them afterwards, and that they would co-operate in providing an international force.<sup>3</sup> Sir John Simon explained in the House of Commons that the government desired to avoid any need for isolated intervention by the French (who were themselves unwilling to exercise the rights given them in this respect by the Versailles Treaty).<sup>4</sup> The Council accepted the suggestion of an international force, and under its authority British, Italian, Swedish, and Dutch troops occupied the Saar during the plebiscite. After the decisive vote for reunion with Germany, Herr Hitler declared again that the *Reich* would raise no further territorial claims against France.<sup>5</sup>

The Franco-Italian rapprochement, which was due to fear of Germany, led to the conversations in Rome between Monsieur Laval and Signor Mussolini in January 1935. Immediately afterwards MM. Flandin and Laval visited London, and a Franco-British *communiqué* was issued on February 3.<sup>6</sup> Great Britain and France, it said, aimed at removing the tendencies towards a race in armaments through policies of conciliation and co-operation ; the British government welcomed the understanding between France and Italy, and associated itself with their determination to maintain the independence of Austria ; England and France were agreed that Germany was not entitled to rearm by a unilateral repudiation of the Peace Treaties, and they now hoped for a general settlement with Germany, including the organization of security by mutual assistance pacts in Eastern and Central Europe, and agreement on armaments to replace

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, July 30, 1934 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 292, col. 2339).

<sup>2</sup> Speech at Ehrenbreitstein, August 26, 1934 : *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 28, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Statement at the League Council, December 5, 1934 : *The Times*, December 6, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons, December 6, 1934 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 295, col. 1836).

<sup>5</sup> Broadcast to the Saar, January 15, 1935 : *The Times*, January 16, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4798 (1935).

Part V of the Versailles Treaty, and Germany's return to the League ; they were also impressed by the danger of aerial aggression, and proposed a pact of mutual assistance in Western Europe to avert it. Sir John Simon explained that the obligations of such a pact would do no more than define British commitments under Locarno, and that it would give Great Britain herself a guarantee of assistance which she had not had under Locarno. ' This plan would provide us for the first time with an undertaking for our own immediate advantage.' <sup>1</sup> The Franco-British *communiqué* was favourably received by the Western Powers ; and the German government, which showed far more interest in the Western air pact than in the Eastern mutual assistance pact, suggested Anglo-German direct conversations.<sup>2</sup> This alarmed France and the U.S.S.R. ; they insisted that the Western air pact should not be negotiated separately from the other proposals, and the Soviet government suggested a British visit to Moscow as well as to Berlin. The British and German governments agreed, and it was arranged that British ministers should visit Berlin, Warsaw, and Moscow to negotiate for the acceptance of the Anglo-French proposals.

On March 4 the British government issued a White Paper for the debate on the increase in the defence estimates, which emphasized, as the chief reason for British rearmament, the illegal rearmament of Germany.<sup>3</sup> This caused bitter resentment in Germany, and the following day the German government postponed the British ministers' visit because Herr Hitler had caught a cold. On March 9 foreign air *attachés* in Berlin were told that the German Air Force had come into existence again on March 1.<sup>4</sup> On March 15 Monsieur Flandin announced to the Chamber of Deputies the extension of conscript service to two years, in order to remedy the approaching shortage of recruits due to the low birth-rate of the War years.<sup>5</sup> On March 16, in a proclamation to the German people, Herr Hitler announced that Germany would resume complete freedom in providing for her defence, and promulgated a law which reintroduced conscription and established an army of thirty-six divisions.<sup>6</sup>

After consultation with the French and Italian governments, the British government sent a note to Berlin, protesting against unilateral denunciation of treaties, and reminding Germany that they had hoped to conclude a freely negotiated general

<sup>1</sup> Broadcast of February 3, 1935 : *The Times*, February 4, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> German reply to the Franco-British *communiqué*, February 14, 1935 ; British Blue Book, Cmd. 5143 (1936), No. 6.

<sup>3</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4827 (1935).

<sup>4</sup> French Memorandum to the League of Nations, April 9, 1935 : *League of Nations Official Journal*, May 1935.

<sup>5</sup> *Le Temps*, March 16, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> *The New York Times*, March 17, 1935.

settlement and an agreement on armaments.<sup>1</sup> When they arrived in Berlin, the British ministers learnt that the German government was hostile to the organization of collective security in Eastern and Central Europe, and that they claimed all categories of weapons possessed by other countries, 35 per cent. of British tonnage in naval armaments, and parity between Great Britain, France, and Germany in the air.<sup>2</sup>

The Italo-Franco-British conference, originally proposed before March 16 but hastened by the German action, met at Stresa in April. The Powers agreed to pursue a common policy at the imminent Extraordinary Session of the League Council; they confirmed the principle of a Western air pact, and deplored the loss of confidence through Germany's rearmament; Italy and Great Britain formally reaffirmed their obligations under Locarno, and the three Powers agreed to oppose by all practicable means any unilateral repudiation of treaties which might endanger the peace of Europe.<sup>3</sup> There were other agreements about the Eastern pact and Austrian independence; Ethiopia was not formally discussed, although Italy's military preparations were already well advanced. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald explained that Great Britain had assumed no new commitments; German rearmament had not been condoned, but it was hoped that Germany would still co-operate in creating a European system of security.<sup>4</sup> The day after Stresa the Extraordinary Session of the League Council met, and adopted a resolution proposed by the three Powers, which condemned Germany's failure to respect her international obligations, approved the London Declaration of February 3, and referred for consideration what sanctions should be applied in the event of another unilateral repudiation of a treaty which endangered the peace of Europe.<sup>5</sup> Ethiopia's appeal to the League under Article 15 was shelved.<sup>6</sup>

German rearmament produced not only the Stresa front, but also the Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance, which was signed on May 2, 1935. Germany protested against the pact on the grounds that it was politically objectionable and that it was incompatible with the Locarno treaty.<sup>7</sup> The pact was viewed with considerable mistrust in France itself, and was not ratified

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4848 (1935).

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Simon in the House of Commons, April 9, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 300, cols. 984-6).

<sup>3</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4880 (1935).

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons, April 17, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 300, col. 1853).

<sup>5</sup> *League of Nations Official Journal*, May 1935, p. 551.

<sup>6</sup> See p. 40 below.

<sup>7</sup> German memorandum of May 29, 1935; British Blue Book, Cmd. 5143 (1936), No. 23.



by the French Senate until ten months later. The British government, however, supported the French thesis that there was nothing in the pact which conflicted with or modified Locarno <sup>1</sup>; and maintained that if Germany and the U.S.S.R. went to war, and France attacked Germany in support of Russia under Articles 16 or 15 of the Covenant, England would not be obliged to support Germany.<sup>2</sup>

In June England sought to avert the same threat of German armaments by the Anglo-German naval treaty.<sup>3</sup> The French government had not been consulted, and were shocked by what they regarded as a condonation of German rearmament so soon after it had been condemned in the Council resolution at Geneva. The Treaty was also criticized in Parliament as a breach of the Versailles Treaty, the London Declaration of February 3, and the Stresa agreements; but Sir Samuel Hoare described it as a realist contribution to peace,<sup>4</sup> and Mr. Eden compared it to the agreement between France and the U.S.S.R.<sup>5</sup> French resentment continued, however, and further divergence in policy was now occasioned by the Italian aggression against Ethiopia.

<sup>1</sup> Note to Baron von Hoesch, July 5, 1935; British Blue Book, Cmd. 5143 (1936), No. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Simon in the House of Commons, May 2, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 301, cols. 681-2).

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 10-11 above.

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons, July 11, 1935 (*ibid.*, Vol. 304, cols. 511-2).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, July 11, 1935 (*ibid.*, col. 617).

## Great Britain and Western Europe since 1935

*The League and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-6*

THE relations of Great Britain and Italy in regard to Abyssinia were determined, apart from the general obligations of the League Covenant and the Kellogg Pact, by the agreement of 1906 and the notes exchanged in 1925. By the London Treaty of December 1906, Great Britain, France, and Italy agreed to maintain the integrity of Abyssinia, and to respect each other's spheres of interests therein.<sup>1</sup> In December 1925 there was an exchange of notes between the British and Italian governments, which further defined their interests in Abyssinia and promised each other mutual support in pursuing them.<sup>2</sup> From the time when the Abyssinian government first informed the members of the League of the Italian preparations for aggression, British policy sought an Italo-Ethiopian settlement by conciliation, on the basis of the agreements of 1906 and 1925, and within the limits of the Covenant.<sup>3</sup> The Maffey Commission reported that in regard to local British interests the conquest of Abyssinia by Italy was a matter of indifference, and in regard to imperial defence, although an independent Abyssinia was preferable, an Italian Abyssinia would be a threat to British interests only in the event of a war with Italy, which seemed improbable.<sup>4</sup> British policy towards Italy was determined by European and not African considerations, and above all by the desire to maintain the Stresa front between Great Britain, France and Italy in the face of a rearming Germany.

In the Franco-Italian agreement of January 1935, France granted Italy the right to seek concessions throughout Abyssinia, but Monsieur Laval afterwards denied that he gave Signor Mussolini *carte blanche*.<sup>5</sup> The League Council in January shelved the Abyssinian appeal under Article 11, and Mr. Eden and Monsieur Laval persuaded the Italian and Abyssinian governments to resort to the conciliation procedure of their treaty of 1928. At the end of January, the Italian government invited the

<sup>1</sup> *Documents on International Affairs for 1935* (R.I.I.A.), Vol. II, p. 556.

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 2680 (1926).

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, June 7, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *Giornale d'Italia*, February 20, 1936; *The Times*, February 20, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> Chamber of Deputies, December 28, 1936; for the subsequent history of the Franco-Italian Agreement of 1935 see chapter V.

British to consider specific agreements for the harmonious development of Italian and British interests in Abyssinia.<sup>1</sup> The British replied that the matter would be examined, which the Italian government considered evasiveness.<sup>2</sup> The British government, however, began at once to investigate British interests in Abyssinia, and set up the interdepartmental commission under Sir John Maffey for that purpose.<sup>3</sup> Early in February Italy mobilized two divisions; the British government refused to raise the matter at Geneva,<sup>4</sup> but the ambassador in Rome reminded the Italian government of the agreement not to intervene in Abyssinia in the London Treaty of 1906.<sup>5</sup> The Stresa *communiqué*, like the London Declaration of February 3, embodied a common policy through being confined to European affairs. The British delegates were prepared to discuss Abyssinia at Stresa,<sup>6</sup> but since Signor Mussolini did not refer to it, it was not formally discussed<sup>7</sup>; and in the joint resolution, which said that the three Powers had examined the European situation, Signor Mussolini inserted the word 'European' to show that the African situation had been omitted.<sup>8</sup>

On May 1 the Italian government again invited the British to begin friendly conversations on the co-ordination of their interests in Abyssinia, and were again dissatisfied with the response.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter Anglo-Italian relations rapidly deteriorated; the diplomatic solidarity of the Stresa Powers hardly survived the Stresa Conference a month. On May 14 Signor Mussolini publicly discouraged intervention by Great Britain and France, and said that the good relations between the Stresa Powers had so far prevented diplomatic pressure by them<sup>10</sup>; but at the end of May, Signor Gayda opened the anti-British campaign in the Italian press which first gave the Italo-Ethiopian War the character of a struggle between Italy and Great Britain.<sup>11</sup> In England there was steadily increasing anxiety, not because of the Italian allegations against British imperialism, but because of the plain intentions of Italian imperialism. The British

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Signor Mussolini, *Morning Post*, September 17, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *Morning Post*, September 18, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, February 24, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 309, col. 7); see p. 40 above.

<sup>4</sup> Sir John Simon in the House of Commons, February 18, 1935 (*ibid.*, Vol. 298, cols. 8-9).

<sup>5</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, February 25, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> *Morning Post*, September 18, 1935; *Daily Telegraph*, October 19, 1935.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons, August 1, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 304, col. 2934).

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Signor Mussolini, *Morning Post*, September 17, 1935.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Speech to the Senate, May 14, 1935.

<sup>11</sup> *Giornale d'Italia*, May 22 and 24, 1935.



government continued to hope for a settlement by direct negotiation outside the League, and Mr. Eden persuaded the disputants to accept conciliation at the Council meeting at the end of May, but insisted on a definite term to that procedure.

On June 18 the Maffey Commission made its report to the Foreign Secretary, that no local British interests were involved in an Italian conquest of Abyssinia.<sup>1</sup> The following week, at the request of the British government,<sup>2</sup> Signor Mussolini received Mr. Eden in Rome. Mr. Eden pointed out that the situation had developed to a point where British policy was no longer founded on considerations of British colonial interests, but on such wider issues as the maintenance of European peace and of the League's authority<sup>3</sup>; and he said that the British government were prepared to cede to Abyssinia a strip of land in British Somaliland, including the port of Zeila, in order to facilitate territorial and economic concessions by Abyssinia to Italy.<sup>4</sup> The Duce rejected this offer at once. In France it confirmed the suspicions of British policy just aroused by the Anglo-German naval agreement; it was considered a breach of confidence, for Mr. Eden had not mentioned it in his conversations with the French government on his way to Rome; the proposal was prejudicial to French interests in Jibuti; and the proper place for offers of that kind was at Geneva. Sir Samuel Hoare said that the offer was a constructive proposal that would have been justified by its acceptance.<sup>5</sup> At the end of July the British government decided to impose an embargo on the export of arms to Abyssinia and Italy.<sup>6</sup>

On August 1 Sir Samuel Hoare spoke more strongly, in a speech in which the government, for the first time in this context, made a public affirmation of British obligations under the Covenant; he said that if Italy had complaints she should put them before the League; war would lead to confusion in Europe, the weakening of the League, and the unsettlement of the coloured races.<sup>7</sup> At the Extraordinary Council Meeting at the beginning of August it was Italy's policy still to prevent the dispute coming before the Council; Mr. Eden and Monsieur Laval agreed to the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, February 24, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 309, cols. 7-8).

<sup>2</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons, July 11, 1935 (*ibid.*, col. 519).

<sup>3</sup> *Morning Post*, September 18, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, July 1, 1935; Mr. Malcolm MacDonald in the House of Commons, July 4, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 303, cols. 1521 and 2006).

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons, July 11, 1935 (*ibid.*, Vol. 309, col. 520).

<sup>6</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons, July 25, 1935 (*ibid.*, col. 2016).

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons, August 1, 1935 (*ibid.*, col. 2933).

extension of the conciliation procedure, and to conversations outside the League by the three Powers of the treaty of 1906; but whatever the state of the negotiations the Council would consider the dispute on September 4.<sup>1</sup> The representatives of the three Powers of the 1906 treaty met in Paris on August 16; the British and French proposed a scheme for the economic development and administrative reorganization of Abyssinia, with Abyssinia's consent, through collective assistance offered by the three Powers, with particular attention to the special interests of Italy; the possibility of territorial adjustments between Italy and Abyssinia was not excluded.<sup>2</sup> The Italians rejected this offer, and with the conference ended the last hope of a settlement by negotiation. Neither the British nor French governments yet gave any indication of their policy in regard to Article 16.

The League Council met on September 4 with the Italo-Ethiopian dispute as the first item on their agenda; the Italian case was presented for the first time, and the Italian representative asserted that Abyssinia could have equality neither of rights nor of duties with civilized States; the Abyssinian representative asked firmly for prompt action, under the third paragraph of Article 15 and under Article 10, to prevent the projected war. A Committee of Five was formed to attempt conciliation once more; it made a proposal, based on the Paris proposals of August, which was rejected by the Italian government.

It was now clear that coercion of the aggressor under Article 16 could no longer be avoided. Great Britain's declared policy was based solely upon the Covenant. French hesitancy in supporting sanctions was due not to African but to European causes: the desire to prevent the breakdown of the Stresa front against Germany, either by driving Italy into alliance with Germany, or by weakening Italy by sanctions to such an extent that she would no longer be able to guarantee the independence of Austria. She feared to lose her new ally of the preceding January, having always envisaged the application of Article 16 in regard, above all, to German aggression in Europe.

'We have no wish to humiliate Italy or to weaken it', said Sir Samuel Hoare. 'Indeed, we are most anxious to see a strong Italy in the world, an Italy that is strong, morally, physically, and socially, and that is able to contribute to the world valuable assistance. . . . We have not the least desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Italy, and we are most

<sup>1</sup> Resolutions adopted by the League Council, August 3, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Report to the League Council by Mr. Eden, September 4, 1935.

anxious to see a strong Italy governed by a strong government in whatever form the Italian people may desire.”<sup>1</sup>

### *The Four Aspects of British Policy*

The policy of the British government, therefore, was four-fold. (i) They endeavoured to maintain normal relations with Italy, and to assure the Italian government of their goodwill in general, though not in respect of the aggression against Abyssinia; (ii) they took precautionary measures against an Italian attack, since Italy denounced England as her chief enemy; (iii) they took part in limited measures of coercion against Italy under Article 16; (iv) they continued to seek a settlement by conciliation.

(i) The British government frequently declared that the conflict was not between Italy and Great Britain but between Italy and the League, for Great Britain would take no isolated action.<sup>2</sup>

On September 20 the British ambassador in Rome informed the Italian government of the movements of the British fleet in the Mediterranean, ‘adding that they were not intended to imply any aggressive intention on the part of His Majesty’s Government. He explained that such measures had been taken as a natural consequence of the impression created by the violence of the campaign against the United Kingdom which had been conducted by the Italian press during the last few weeks’.<sup>3</sup> Signor Suvich made a similar assurance with regard to Italian precautions in Libya. On September 25 Sir Samuel Hoare sent a personal message to Signor Mussolini in which he assured him that he was ‘particularly desirous of eliminating every unnecessary misunderstanding between the two countries’.<sup>4</sup> In response, the Italian cabinet declared once more that they had no aims damaging to British interests.<sup>5</sup> On April 3, 1936, Signor Grandi gave the British government an assurance of respect for existing treaties securing the rights of Great Britain in Abyssinia, especially in respect of Lake Tana.<sup>6</sup>

(ii) In view of the attitude expressed in the Italian press, the British government strengthened their forces in the Mediterranean against a possible Italian attack in reply to the application of sanctions, and obtained assurances of assistance from France and other Powers, which had the character of a temporary organiza-

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, December 5, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 307, cols. 345–6).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mr. Baldwin’s speech at Worcester, October 19, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, September 23, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26, 1935.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, September 30, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, April 4, 1936.

tion of regional collective security in the Mediterranean. At the end of August 1935 the Mediterranean Fleet left Malta for its autumn cruise, and was concentrated at Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> In the middle of September it was joined there by reinforcements from all over the world, and the greater part of the Home Fleet was concentrated at Gibraltar. These dispositions were made on the initiative of the British government, without consultation with the League or the French government. On September 24 the British government asked the French government<sup>2</sup> their attitude :

‘ in case a Member of the League of Nations, who declares himself ready to fulfil his obligations in accordance with the terms of Article 16 of the Covenant and who is making the necessary preparations to that end, should be attacked before the Article in question became applicable, that is to say, before the other Members of the League of Nations were expressly bound to lend this Member the mutual support provided for against a Covenant-breaking State. The British Government . . . would be glad to know whether, in such a case, they might count on the same support from the French Government as they are entitled to receive under paragraph 3 of Article 16 when the measures provided for in this Article are applied.’<sup>3</sup>

The French government replied that, on condition of reciprocity, they were ready to enter into consultation with a Power that judged it necessary to take military, naval, or air measures in order to fulfil its obligations under the Covenant or Locarno.

On October 7 the Council accepted the view of its Committee of Six<sup>4</sup> that Italy had resorted to war in disregard of her covenants, and on October 14 the Co-ordination Committee<sup>5</sup> recalled the obligation of League Members under Article 16 mutually to sup-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons, December 18, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 307, col. 1549).

<sup>2</sup> As early as September 10 the French government had on their part asked the British government ‘ for information as to the extent to which the French government might be assured in the future of the immediate and effective application by the United Kingdom of all the sanctions provided in Article 16 of the Covenant in the event of a violation of the Covenant of the League of Nations and a resort to force in Europe . . . on the part of some European state, whether or not that state might be a member of the League of Nations ’ (British Note to France, September 26, 1935 ; *The Times*, September 30, 1935). In a note of September 26 the British government replied that Article 16 was not applicable to the failure to fulfil terms of a treaty, and that ‘ the nature of the action appropriate to be taken under it may vary according to the circumstances of each particular case ’ (*The Times*, September 30, 1935).

<sup>3</sup> French Note to Great Britain, October 5, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Set up on October 5 to examine the situation.

<sup>5</sup> Set up on October 10 to deal with the application of sanctions.

port one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the Covenant-breaking States. The British government therefore asked, first the French government, and then the Greek, Turkish, and Yugoslav governments, if these shared their interpretation of mutual support under Article 16, and received full assurances of assistance if Italy attacked Britain in the Mediterranean. The replies of the Greek and Turkish governments were made with the full agreement of the Rumanian government, and that of the Yugoslav government in full agreement with both the Rumanian and Czechoslovak governments. A similar request to the Spanish government met with a virtual refusal.<sup>1</sup>

On June 18, 1936, Mr. Eden announced the government's intention of recommending the abandonment of sanctions, but proposed that the assurances of mutual assistance in the Mediterranean should continue to cover the period of uncertainty following termination of action under Article 16.<sup>2</sup> On July 1 he repeated in the Assembly that Great Britain would stand by these assurances for this period. On July 9 Sir Samuel Hoare, as First Lord of the Admiralty, announced that 'those units which were sent temporarily to the Mediterranean from the home station and from other stations abroad' were to be released at an early date.<sup>3</sup> The French government had held that their assurance of mutual support automatically ended with the abandonment of sanctions.<sup>4</sup> The assurances of assistance from Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia ceased on July 27, when the British government announced the 'period of uncertainty' to be ended.<sup>5</sup>

(iii) The British government agreed to the application of Article 16 against Italy on two conditions: first, that there should be no question of military coercion of the aggressor, nor of sanctions which might involve the necessity for military measures; secondly, that Great Britain would apply no sanctions apart from those applied also by the great body of her fellow-Members of the League. These conditions were expressed by Mr. Runciman:

'Let me say emphatically that we do not desire war. In no quarter of the country among young or old is there any responsible body of men or women who desire war. . . . We shall do everything in our power to maintain the position and

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5072 (1936).

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, June 18, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 313, col. 1207).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, July 9, 1936 (*ibid.*, Vol. 314, cols. 1397-8).

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, July 15, 1936 (*ibid.*, col. 2025).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, July 27, 1936 (*ibid.*, Vol. 315, col. 1122).



prestige of this country and the peace of the world without running the risk of going to war. So long as other nations will combine with us for the maintenance of the authority of the League of Nations, so long we will stand at their side, but we cannot and will not act alone.' <sup>1</sup>

Mr. Baldwin himself subsequently defended his government's policy in the following words: 'I said in the House of Commons two years ago, and I beg your attention to those words: "If you are going to adopt a sanction without being ready for war, you are not an honest trustee of the nation."' <sup>2</sup>

The Labour Party had already pledged themselves to the fulfilment of Article 16 without qualifications. At the Party Conference at Brighton in October they had passed by an overwhelming majority a resolution calling for 'all the necessary measures provided by the Covenant to resist Italy's unjust and rapacious attack',<sup>3</sup> and their election pronouncements reaffirmed this policy. 'We are for the Covenant of the League,' said Mr. Herbert Morrison, 'and what it implies.'<sup>4</sup> But despite the strikingly large vote for military sanctions in the Peace Ballot in the summer,<sup>5</sup> public opinion now refused to face the logical necessity of fulfilling Great Britain's contingent obligations to undertake military measures when milder ones proved ineffective. Both sides in the election campaign said that they stood by the Covenant, but neither of them (though for different reasons) was prepared to emphasize the possible duty of military action against Italy.

On September 10, 1935, the day before the Assembly met, Sir Samuel Hoare and Monsieur Laval decided at Geneva not to apply military sanctions, at least to begin with, against the aggressor.

'Without waiting for the official meeting of the Council', said Monsieur Laval later, 'we discussed and examined—in that spirit of close co-operation which ought always to animate French and British statesmen—the grave situation with which the world was going to be confronted by the Italo-Ethiopian War. We found ourselves instantaneously in agreement upon ruling out military sanctions, not adopting any measures of

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Penzance, October 18, 1935: *The Times*, October 19, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, June 18, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 313, col. 1237).

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, October 2, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Broadcast speech of November 7, 1935: *Manchester Guardian*, November 8, 1935.

<sup>5</sup> For, 6,784,368; against, 2,351,981; doubtful, 40,893; abstentions, 2,365,441.

naval blockade, never contemplating the closure of the Suez Canal—in a word, ruling out everything that might lead to war.’<sup>1</sup>

On September 11, Sir Samuel Hoare made the most emphatic and effective assertion of Great Britain’s adherence to the principles of the League ever heard in the Assembly from a British Conservative Foreign Secretary.

‘On behalf of His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom, I can say that . . . that Government will be second to none in its intention to fulfil, within the measure of its capacity, the obligations which the Covenant lays upon it. . . . The attitude of His Majesty’s Government has always been one of unswerving fidelity to the League and all that it stands for, and the case now before us is no exception, but, on the contrary, the continuance of that rule. The recent response of public opinion shows how completely the nation supports the Government in the full acceptance of the obligations of League membership, which is the oft-proclaimed key-note of British policy. . . . In conformity with its precise and specific obligations, the League stands, and my country stands with it, for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. . . . There, then, is the British attitude towards the Covenant. I cannot believe that it will be changed so long as the League remains an effective body and the main bridge between the United Kingdom and the Continent remains intact.’

In the course of the negotiations between Great Britain and France for mutual assistance in the Mediterranean, the two governments agreed not only upon mutual assistance under the third paragraph of Article 16, but also not to execute Article 16 more fully or more rapidly than each other in agreement with the League as a whole.

‘The British Government . . . offers the French Government the assurance that it will not take the initiative in any measure against Italy which would not be in conformity with the decisions taken, or to be taken, by the League of Nations in full agreement with France.’<sup>2</sup>

On October 3 the Italian invasion of Abyssinia began. On October 7 the Council declared that Italy had resorted to war in

<sup>1</sup> Chamber of Deputies, December 28, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> French Note to Great Britain, October 18, 1935; British White Paper, Cmd. 5072 (1936).



disregard of its covenants, and on October 10 Mr. Eden announced to the Assembly the British government's willingness to take part in collective action under Article 16. It was largely owing to his initiative that agreement was reached among League Members upon the economic sanctions which were imposed in October and November. These sanctions were implemented by the British government as follows: First, following the decision of the Co-ordinating Committee on October 11, the British government informed the Secretary-General of the League that they had taken steps to permit the export of munitions of war to Abyssinia.<sup>1</sup> No formal announcement was made in Great Britain, and arms exporters were not informed, but thenceforward the Board of Trade was prepared to consider applications for the export of arms to Abyssinia.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, following the recommendation of the Co-ordinating Committee on October 19, an Order in Council was published on October 26<sup>3</sup> providing for the application of four sanctions against Italy: a ban upon the export of arms to Italy, which came into effect forthwith; a ban upon loans and credits to Italy, to come into effect on October 29; a ban on the export of a scheduled list of raw materials of war to Italy, to come into effect by subsequent decision of the Board of Trade; and a ban on imports from Italy, to be applied at a date to be fixed by the Co-ordination Committee. Thirdly, following the decision of the Co-ordination Committee on November 2, the two latter sanctions came into effect by decision of the Board of Trade on November 18.<sup>4</sup>

On November 22 it became known that the Committee of Eighteen was to be convened on November 29 to discuss an embargo on the export of oil to Italy.

'It seemed clear that, supposing an oil embargo were to be imposed, and that the non-member States took an effective part in it, the oil embargo might have such an effect upon hostilities as to force their termination. Just because of the effectiveness of the oil sanction, provided that the non-member States had a full part in it, the situation immediately became more dangerous from the point of view of Italian resistance.'<sup>5</sup>

Monsieur Laval, therefore, after consultation with the British ambassador,<sup>6</sup> obtained a postponement of the meeting. On

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, October 15, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, October 15, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, October 28, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, November 18, 1935.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons, December 19, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 307, cols. 2008-9).

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, November 25, 1935.

November 29 he obtained a renewed postponement, with the support of the British government,<sup>1</sup> until December 12. By that date the Laval-Hoare plan had been prepared, and consideration of the oil sanction was once more deferred while the plan was *sub judice*. On December 19, after the plan had been discarded, the Committee of Eighteen met again, and shelved the oil sanction indefinitely. On February 12, 1936, the committee of experts on the oil sanction reported in terms generally favourable to its application, which suggested how effective it might already have been, had it been agreed upon in the previous November.<sup>2</sup> There had been recent signs of anxiety on this score in the Italian press,<sup>3</sup> and Italy now threatened to re-man the Italo-French frontier if the oil sanction were applied.<sup>4</sup> On March 2, therefore, when the Committee of Eighteen was to consider the oil sanction, Monsieur Flandin obtained Mr. Eden's consent to a postponement of the issue while a new attempt was made to mediate between aggressor and victim,<sup>5</sup> though Mr. Eden declared that the British government were in favour of the oil sanction.<sup>6</sup> In the ensuing delay the German government made the military reoccupation of the Rhineland, which immediately transformed the whole international situation. As, a year before, fear of a rearmed Germany had stopped Great Britain and France from preventing Italian aggression in advance, so now fear of a Germany that had remilitarized the Rhineland stopped them from preventing the successful consummation of Italian aggression. There was no further proposal of an oil sanction.

On May 5, 1936, Marshal Badoglio entered Addis Ababa. On June 10 the policy of the British government in these circumstances was disclosed by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, in a speech referring to the maintenance or intensification of sanctions as 'the very midsummer of madness'.<sup>7</sup> On June 18 Mr. Eden declared that sanctions had been a failure, the Italian campaign had been successful, nothing but military action, which no one was prepared to take, would alter the situation, and therefore the government meant to advise the abandonment of sanctions at Geneva.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, November 30, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5094 (1936).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. article attributed to Signor Mussolini, *Popolo d'Italia*, February 1, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, March 5, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> *L'Oeuvre*, March 3, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> Speech to the Committee of Eighteen, March 2, 1936.

<sup>7</sup> Speech to the Nineteen-Hundred Club, June 10, 1936: *The Times*, June 11, 1936.

<sup>8</sup> House of Commons, June 18, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 313, col. 1201).

‘The point is this,’ said Sir John Simon, ‘that, with the present situation in Europe and the great dangers surrounding us here at home, I am not prepared to see a single ship sunk even in a successful naval battle in the cause of Abyssinian independence.’<sup>1</sup>

On July 1 Mr. Eden announced to the Assembly the opinion of the British government ‘that, in existing conditions, the continuance of the sanctions at present in force can serve no useful purpose’. On July 4 the Assembly voted for the abandonment of sanctions.

(iv) The British government attempted to pursue conciliation between aggressor and victim, side by side with limited sanctions against the aggressor.

‘We have consistently and steadily followed the double line that has time after time been approved by the League and by this House,’ said Sir Samuel Hoare. ‘On the one hand, we have taken our full part in collective action under the Covenant and, on the other hand, we have continued our efforts for a peaceful settlement.’<sup>2</sup>

The Committee of Five set up by the Council on September 6, 1935, to seek a pacific settlement of the dispute made proposals which were rejected by the Italian government on September 21; the Committee, however, remained in being, in order to renew its efforts later. On October 15, immediately after the application of Article 16 against Italy had been decided upon, Monsieur Laval was reported to have suggested peace terms to Italy.<sup>3</sup> Before the end of October, Sir Samuel Hoare sent a despatch to the British Minister at Addis Ababa instructing him to urge the Emperor to agree to negotiations for a settlement by compromise.<sup>4</sup> On November 2, Monsieur van Zeeland proposed in the Co-ordination Committee that Great Britain and France be entrusted with the mission of seeking a settlement of the dispute. Monsieur Komarnicki pointed out that the Committee had no power to confer a formal mandate on those Powers, since the Council alone was competent to deal with the substance of the problem; the minutes of the Committee therefore only ‘took note of the desire expressed by the Belgian delegate’. This

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, June 23, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 313, col. 1629).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1935 (*ibid.*, Vol. 307, col. 342).

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, October 16, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *Survey of International Affairs for 1935*, Vol. II, p. 284.

however, was widely interpreted as a 'moral mandate' conferred on the two Powers by the League.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of November it was decided to convene the Committee of Eighteen to discuss the oil embargo against Italy. This, as Sir Samuel Hoare said later, marked the turning-point.

'It was clear that a new situation was about to be created by the question of the oil embargo. . . . From all sides we received reports that no responsible government could disregard that Italy would regard the oil embargo as a military sanction or an act involving war against her.'<sup>2</sup>

Monsieur Laval secured a postponement of the meeting of the Committee of Eighteen until December 12, and Sir Samuel Hoare spent December 7 and 8 in consultation with him in Paris. There they came to final agreement upon the plan to be associated with their names, as 'the only basis upon which it was even remotely likely that we could at least start a peace discussion'.<sup>3</sup> Its principal features were two: first, the exchange of territories, whereby Abyssinia should cede to Italy half the province of Tigre, the Danakil country, and most of the province of Ogaden, in return for a strip of territory to the sea and the port of Assab; secondly, a zone of economic expansion and settlement in southern Ethiopia reserved to Italy, covering a third of the area of the Abyssinian Empire.<sup>4</sup> The two Powers submitted the plan to Signor Mussolini on December 11, and to the Emperor the day after; and the British minister in Addis Ababa was urged to use his utmost influence to induce the Emperor to give careful and favourable consideration to the proposals and on no account lightly to reject them. The plan had been published in the French press, against the wishes of the British government, on December 9. It was accepted by the cabinet, but was unacceptable to public opinion, and the Foreign Secretary consequently resigned on December 18. The same day the Council met to discuss the plan, which had already been rejected by the Emperor.

'It was proper that the attempt should be made,' said Mr. Eden, 'however invidious the task of those who had to make it.'

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, November 4, 1935; cf. Sir Samuel Hoare's telegram of November 2, 1935, in British White Paper, Cmd. 5044 (1935).

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, December 19, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 307, cols. 2008-9).

<sup>3</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons, December 19, 1935 (*ibid.*, col. 2010).

<sup>4</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5044 (1935).

For that I make no apology. Even if this attempt is to be unsuccessful, the essential importance of conciliation remains, as the League has frequently recognized. The principle therefore was right, even if its application in this instance may not have availed.' <sup>1</sup>

The British government, he added, did not wish to pursue the proposals further. The Council accordingly resolved that it need express no opinion in regard to them.<sup>2</sup>

The next attempt at conciliation was made when the Committee of Eighteen was about to consider the report of the committee of experts on the oil embargo. On March 2 the French and British decided to postpone the action on the oil sanction while a new effort was made to obtain the cessation of hostilities. As a result there was the long delay during which the attention of Great Britain and France was wholly diverted from East Africa to Western Europe by the remilitarization of the Rhineland. On April 20 the Council addressed to Italy 'a supreme appeal' to settle her dispute in the spirit of the Covenant. On May 5 the Italians entered Addis Ababa, and on May 9 Signor Mussolini declared that Abyssinia was annexed to Italy.

The failure of the League of Nations, led by Great Britain and France, to 'preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence' of Ethiopia, the collapse of organized Abyssinian resistance and the consequent abandonment of the partial sanctions by the League, marked the breakdown of the system of collective security which it had been the aim of statesmen to build up on the basis of the Covenant. The blow to British prestige was hardly less severe than the blow to the League itself, for the Italian victory wore the appearance of a victory over Great Britain. The smaller Powers of Europe, recognizing that membership of the League no longer contributed anything substantial to their security, hastened to turn to a policy of armed neutrality; and Great Britain, whose rebuff was generally attributed to the weakness of her armaments, decided greatly to accelerate the vast rearmament programme first outlined in the statement relating to defence,<sup>3</sup> published on March 3, 1936. At the same time the partial sanctions applied to Italy, while inadequate to restrain aggression, had the effect of driving Italy into the German camp and of dividing Europe into two opposing *blocs*, which, within six months of the conclusion of the Ethiopian War, almost came into open conflict in the Civil War in Spain.

<sup>1</sup> Speech to the Council, December 18, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Council resolution of December 19, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5107 (1936).



*The Altered Problem of Western European Security*

The exposure of London and Southern England to sudden aerial aggression exercised the British government from the time that the failure of the Disarmament Conference became apparent. Henceforward British policy had one main objective, aerial rearmament until parity was reached with the greatest air force within striking distance of Great Britain,<sup>1</sup> and one subsidiary objective, a Locarno air pact. The first formal proposal of collective security in the air for Western Europe was in the London Declaration of February 3, 1935. Its importance was shown by Sir John Simon's broadcast explanation of it to the British people the same evening; he said that the pact would guarantee Great Britain's security, which Locarno had not done, but suggested that distance might make reciprocal guarantees between Italy and Great Britain impossible.<sup>2</sup> This consideration was approved in the Italian government's reply.<sup>3</sup> The British conception of the air pact included three elements: a collective security agreement, limitation of air forces (on the basis of parity between Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy), and the outlawry of indiscriminate bombing.<sup>4</sup> The French welcomed the pact because it drew France and Great Britain closer together<sup>5</sup>; and they insisted that it would be impossible to fulfil without supplementary bilateral pacts (particularly between France and Great Britain) which provided for technical conversations and instantaneous concerted action. The possibility of these was mentioned in the Stresa *communiqué*.<sup>6</sup> The British approved of bilateral arrangements only if they contributed to the effectiveness of a general pact; the Germans held that they would destroy the confidence created by the main pact.<sup>7</sup>

In August, 1935, the initiative in negotiations passed from Germany to Great Britain; the Anglo-Italian tension, which led the British government to desire an immediate agreement in Western Europe, deterred the German government from committing themselves. To their dislike of the multilateral arrangements was added a growing concern with the Franco-Soviet Pact, which made it impossible for them to regard the security of Western

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons, July 19, 1934 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 292, col. 1275).

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, February 4, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, February 11, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Sir John Simon in the House of Commons, May 31, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 302, cols. 1452-3).

<sup>5</sup> Monsieur Flandin in the Chamber of Deputies, February 5, 1935; *Le Temps*, February 7, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4880 (1935).

<sup>7</sup> British Blue Book, Cmd. 5143 (1936), Nos. 19 and 31.

Europe as a separate matter, or to determine their air strength in relation to the French air force only.<sup>1</sup> At the end of 1935 Mr. Eden revived the negotiations, but the Germans still maintained that they were of no use while the Italo-Ethiopian War lasted, and in March 1936 the remilitarization of the Rhineland removed the conditions under which agreement was possible. Two years later, on February 2, 1938, Mr. Eden announced that the British government were still hoping for an international agreement to limit aerial bombing, and that a thorough survey of the matter was being made preparatory to an approach to other governments.<sup>2</sup>

The Franco-Soviet Pact was ratified by the French Chamber on February 27, 1936, and by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate on March 4. On March 7, the German government informed the other Locarno Powers that since in their view the system of alliances between France, the U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia infringed the Locarno Pact, they had determined to restore full sovereignty over the Rhineland; and detachments of infantry and artillery entered the demilitarized zone. The effects of this were three-fold:

(i) The collapse of the Locarno system, which in the German contention had already been destroyed by the Franco-Soviet Pact; for France and Belgium were now deprived of the organization of security against German aggression which it had taken the six years between Versailles and Locarno for them to find, while Germany lost the British guarantee; in addition Great Britain lost the hope of guaranteeing her own security against the rearmed Germany by extending the Locarno system to the air.

(ii) The strategic separation of Eastern and Western Europe which was, perhaps, the genuine object of the German action; for the erection of a line of fortifications opposite the Maginot Line would make it difficult, if not impossible, for France to come to the aid of an Eastern European country attacked by Germany; and if Germany could negotiate a new Western settlement by guaranteeing the Western countries against aggression, she would have a free hand in the East.

(iii) The increase of distrust of Germany; for the German action was the second example within a year of unilateral repudiation of international obligations, and it had occurred without any previous notice to the Powers concerned and without any attempt to enter into negotiations on the subject; it was 'the *fait accompli* in its most brutal form'.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it marked the transition

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, Cmd. 5143 (1936), No. 46.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, February 2, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 331, col. 341).

<sup>3</sup> Broadcast speech of M. Sarraut, March 8, 1936.



from Germany's 'defensive' diplomacy, by which she sought to free herself from the 'Versailles *Diktat*' and to re-establish her equality of status with other great Powers, to an 'offensive' diplomacy by which she pursued her ulterior aims; for the Locarno Pact was not part of the 'Versailles *Diktat*', and although it limited full German sovereignty by perpetuating the 'unheard-of hardness' of the demilitarized zone, it had been expressly reaffirmed by Herr Hitler only ten months earlier, with the reservation, however, 'so long as the other partners are on their side ready to stand by the pact'.<sup>1</sup> This combined with the progress of German rearmament to bring about an important change in British opinion. Hitherto the increase of German power had been regarded as, primarily, a threat to the stability of the continental European system; henceforward, largely because of the renewed German claim to colonies, it came to be regarded as a direct threat to Great Britain herself. Public feeling was exercised less by the results of Germany's action than by the methods employed, which promised ill for any attempt to settle German claims by agreement.

The first reaction of the British government was to announce that they did not consider their Locarno obligations towards France and Belgium to have lapsed because Germany had repudiated the Locarno Pact. On March 9 Mr. Eden announced that any attack on France or Belgium would cause Great Britain to go to their assistance. During the negotiations between the Locarno Powers other than Germany in London the following week, the British government agreed to conversations between the British, French and Belgian general staffs, in order to give effect to their guarantee; but in return they demanded that the guarantee be reciprocal. The staff conversations were begun in London on April 15.

This guarantee of France and Belgium against aggression was renewed by Mr. Eden, after the negotiations with Germany for a new Locarno had collapsed, at Leamington on November 20. In consequence, Monsieur Delbos made a formal announcement on December 4 of the French government's decision to assume reciprocal obligations of assistance towards Great Britain.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Eden subsequently emphasized that these declarations meant no new departures and concealed neither alliances nor a 'policy of *blocs*'; they were simply the repetition and fulfilment of the undertakings of the preceding March.<sup>3</sup>

The British government were prompt to affirm their duty as

<sup>1</sup> Speech to the Reichstag, May 21, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Chamber of Deputies, December 4, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Speech at Bradford, December 14, 1936.

guarantor of France and Belgium when Germany repudiated the Locarno Pact in 1936, but they proposed at the same time to act as mediator between France and Germany. This was resented in France, where a more strictly legalist view of the German action was taken, and it was hoped that Great Britain would regard the German threat to European security with the same gravity as the Italian aggression against Ethiopia. In the crisis of March 1936, France was all the more dependent upon British support for a firm stand against Germany, inasmuch as the policy of the other Locarno guarantor, Italy, was altogether uncertain.

It was the policy of the British government to start negotiations with Germany as soon as possible, and make 'a period of crisis a period of opportunity'.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, although Germany refused the Anglo-French request that she should limit her troops in the demilitarized zone, agree to the stationing of an international force on the German side of the Rhineland frontier, and submit her case to The Hague Court, the British government gave careful consideration to the German proposals for a European settlement, which were published after the plebiscite of March 29. These proposals comprised a twenty-five years' security pact between France and Belgium and, if desired, the Netherlands on the one hand and Germany on the other, and bilateral pacts between Germany and her eastern neighbours; Germany offered to assume any 'special obligations to render military assistance' that might arise out of the security agreements; she agreed to the appointment of an international commission to supervise, during the period of negotiations, the carrying out of her undertakings that her troops in the Rhineland would not be reinforced or moved nearer the frontier; she offered, on the basis of complete reciprocity, to agree with her two western neighbours to any military limitations on her western frontier, and also to rejoin the League; and she suggested a Franco-German agreement on 'moral disarmament' and the establishment of a special court of arbitration.<sup>2</sup> These proposals were described by Mr. Eden as 'most important and as deserving of careful study'.<sup>3</sup> In connection with them he described the aims of British policy which he hoped to see realized by the end of the summer: a complete European membership of the League, a new security system in Western Europe to replace Locarno, and security arrangements elsewhere directly supervised and controlled by the League; after which it might be possible to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, May 6, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 311, col. 1743).

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5157 (1936).

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, April 3, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 310, col. 2303).

consider disarmament, economic appeasement, and the reform of the League.<sup>1</sup>

On May 6, 1936, the British government sent a *questionnaire* to Berlin, asking for the elucidation of uncertain and equivocal points in the German plan, and showing by implication some of their doubts in regard to German policy.<sup>2</sup> The German government never sent any answer to this *questionnaire*, and discussion of the German plan therefore came to an end. In July proposals for a new conference of the Locarno Powers other than Germany was made through the Belgian government; but the Italian government refused to attend on the grounds of 'the existence of certain Mediterranean obligations' and said that Germany should be invited to the conference.<sup>3</sup> This reply marked the end of the Stresa front in the affairs of the Locarno Powers, and the first appearance of the Rome-Berlin Axis. On July 23 representatives of the Locarno Powers other than Germany and Italy met in London, and decided to arrange a conference of the five Locarno Powers as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup> Formal invitations for it were sent to Germany and Italy, both of which gave an identical and qualified acceptance 'in principle'.<sup>5</sup> The outbreak and development of the Civil War in Spain, however, destroyed the possibility of the conference.

### *The Spanish Civil War and the Policy of Non-Intervention* <sup>6</sup>

In regard to the Spanish Civil War, the British government were concerned less with the naval control of the Western Mediterranean, the neutrality of the Balearics and Spanish Morocco, and the safety of Gibraltar, than with preventing Spain from becoming a battleground between the German-Italian and Franco-Russian *ententes*. Had the conflict been a purely Spanish matter, British policy would have had no interest in the victory of one side rather than the other.

The dangers to Great Britain resulting from foreign intervention in the Spanish war were twofold: the direct dangers to her own position in the Western Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and the dangers to her ally France. The latter were of particular importance in Western European politics, since the establishment of a government in Spain in league with Germany and Italy would result in the encirclement of France by hostile Powers. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries France had

<sup>1</sup> April 6, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 310, cols. 2510-1).

<sup>2</sup> For the text see British White Paper, Cmd. 5175 (1936).

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, July 13, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> *Communiqué* of the Three-Power Conference; *The Times*, July 24, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, August 1, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> The Spanish Civil War was terminated since this section was written.

fought against the same danger in the shape of the Hapsburg empire, and in the nineteenth century, in the shape of the Hohenzollern candidature to the Spanish throne, it had been the occasion of the Franco-Prussian War. There was, moreover, a new factor of weakness in the French position in her modern dependence upon African troops for defence. A hostile Spain, controlling the Balearics, could endanger France's direct communications with her source of man-power in North Africa, between Marseilles and Algiers, and force her to send her troops from Rabat round the west coast of Spain to Bordeaux and Brest, thereby trebling the time that would elapse before her European frontiers could be fully manned. Furthermore, France was dependent upon both North Africa and Spain itself for supplies of minerals and foodstuffs.

From the beginning of the Civil War there were frequent rumours that the price of assistance to the insurgents would be territorial and strategic concessions for the intervening Powers. The British government therefore repeatedly declared their interest in the integrity and independence of Spanish territory. In his Bradford speech Mr. Eden referred to

'the deep interest we feel in the maintenance of the integrity of Spain and Spanish possessions. For I need, perhaps, hardly say, that it is a consideration of great moment to us that, when Spain emerges from her present troubles, that integrity should remain intact and unmenaced from any quarter.'<sup>1</sup>

This interest in the integrity of Spain found expression in the Mediterranean agreement with Italy of January 2, 1937, in the clause declaring that the two Powers 'disclaim any desire to modify or, so far as they are concerned, to see modified the *status quo* as regards national sovereignty of territory in the Mediterranean area'.<sup>2</sup>

The danger that an insurgent victory might produce a Spanish government hostile to Great Britain and harm British commercial interests in Spain, never presented itself very vividly to the British government, for they always believed that in the long run the Spanish people (whichever side won the war) would not tolerate a large body of foreigners in Spain, and would appreciate the disinterestedness of the great Powers that had not intervened. 'Whatever may be the final outcome of this strife,' said Mr. Eden, '... the Spanish people will after this civil war, as for centuries before it, continue to display that proud independence, that almost arrogant individualism which is a distinctive character-

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Bradford, December 14, 1936; *The Times*, December 15, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, January 4, 1937.

istic of the race. There are 24,000,000 reasons why Spain will never for long be dominated by the forces or controlled by the advice of any foreign Power, and they are the 24,000,000 Spaniards that to-day inhabit war-ridden Spain. Six months ago I told the House of Commons of my conviction that intervention in Spain was both bad humanity and bad politics. . . . When at last this terrible Spanish conflict is ended, is it not conceivable, indeed probable, that the Spanish people will like best those who have fought least on their soil, will feel scant gratitude for those who have killed fellow-Spaniards, and will perhaps best understand the motives of that nation which has confined intervention to the saving of many thousands of Spanish lives ? ' <sup>1</sup>

The danger that most strongly impressed the British government was that of the war involving all Europe, if nationals of the great Powers, between which there was already tension, were to join in the fighting in Spain without restriction. This was the fear that determined British policy : ' the main object ', said Mr. Eden, ' has been to neutralize and localize the war and prevent it spreading to Europe as a whole. ' <sup>2</sup>

The government justified their policy in this respect by saying that it had averted the danger of war which seemed imminent in August 1936. ' I do not accept the doctrine of the inevitability of war, ' said Mr. Eden, ' . . . A war postponed may be a war averted. It is in this light that I ask this House to judge our policy in respect of the Spanish conflict during the past year. ' <sup>3</sup>

The dangers of foreign intervention became apparent a fortnight after the outbreak of the revolt. On July 30, 1936, two Italian aeroplanes made forced landings in French Morocco, and an inquiry established that they were machines of the Italian regular air force, carrying machine-guns and ammunition to the rebel base at Melilla.<sup>4</sup> On August 4, German warships arrived in Spanish waters and the German admiral paid a visit to General Franco at Tetuan.<sup>5</sup> The protests by Germany and Italy to the Spanish government, accompanied by demands for indemnities following the murder of their nationals by Spanish revolutionaries, aroused fear of a naval demonstration and intervention.<sup>6</sup> At the same time money and food were sent to the Spanish government

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Liverpool, April 12, 1937 ; *The Times*, April 13, 1937. Cf. Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, November 1, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 328, cols. 581-96).

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, November 1, 1937 (*ibid.*, col. 591).

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, July 15, 1937 (*ibid.*, Vol. 326, cols. 1598-9).

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, August 6, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, August 5, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7, 1936.



by the U.S.S.R. and by liberal and socialist organizations throughout Europe.

On August 1 the French government initiated the policy of non-intervention by making 'a pressing appeal to the principal governments interested for the rapid adoption and rigid observance of an agreed arrangement for non-intervention in Spain'.<sup>1</sup> Their aim was to secure an immediate agreement between the three Mediterranean Powers, Great Britain, France and Italy, and to extend it later to Germany and the U.S.S.R. The British government replied in a note of August 4, warmly supporting the principle of the French appeal,<sup>2</sup> and suggesting the inclusion of Germany and Portugal in the general exchange of views.<sup>3</sup> This non-intervention policy was devised outside the framework of the League, and represented a new departure in international practice which raised a series of legal problems. It was consistently attacked by the Liberal and Labour oppositions both inside and outside Parliament, on the grounds that it deprived the Spanish government of their legal right to buy arms from abroad in order to put down rebellion, and of their legal rights against aggression under the Covenant, and ignored the fact that intervention by Italy and Germany on the side of the insurgents continued without check.

The execution of the non-intervention policy by the British government may be considered under four heads: (i) executive and legislative action to prevent participation in the war by British nationals or the use of British munitions; (ii) the defence of British shipping in Spanish waters; (iii) the support and maintenance of the Non-Intervention Committee; (iv) the appointment of agents accredited to the insurgent authorities.

(i) *The Enforcement of Non-Intervention upon British Nationals.* On August 18, 1936, the Board of Trade revoked, so far as concerned Spanish destinations, all licences for the export of all kinds of arms specified in the Arms Export Prohibition Order of 1931.<sup>4</sup> The Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Munitions to Spain) Act, which made the carriage of arms to Spain by British ships illegal, passed its third reading in the House of Commons on December 1. Mr. Eden said that the alternative to the bill was the grant of belligerent rights, but the government preferred their policy of non-intervention.<sup>5</sup> The Opposition maintained that the bill was a further act of intervention against the Spanish government by depriving them of their legal rights. On January

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, August 3, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, August 5, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, August 6, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, August 20, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons, December 1, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 318, col. 1097).



10, 1937, the Foreign Office issued a warning that it was an offence under the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870 for a British subject to accept any engagement in the military, naval, or air service of either party in Spain, and for any person in the United Kingdom to attempt to recruit persons for such service.<sup>1</sup>

(ii) *The Defence of British Shipping in Spanish Waters.* The refusal to allow belligerent rights to the two sides in Spain meant the necessity of protecting British merchantmen from interference by their navies. Great Britain was constantly involved in disputes arising out of attacks upon or the detention of British vessels, especially by the insurgents, who at an early date obtained naval superiority over the Spanish government, and sought to blockade the eastern coast of Spain. The British government's policy was in general to tolerate no interference with British shipping on the high seas, but, in accordance with the principle of non-intervention, to take no action nor attempt to afford protection within the three-mile limit.<sup>2</sup>

(iii) *The Non-Intervention Committee.* The international committee of the Powers which had agreed to non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War met for the first time in London on September 9, 1936. Henceforward the British government made every effort to keep the Committee in existence and to further its work, above all by playing the rôle of mediator between Germany, Italy, and Portugal on the one hand and France and the U.S.S.R. on the other. Every effective initiative had to come from the British government, for it soon appeared that England was the only great Power which could view the Spanish war with any degree of detachment. An important result of the policy was to transfer effective discussion of the whole question from Geneva to London. The attempts of the Spanish government to raise the issue of Italo-German aggression before the League received no support from the British government, on the grounds that Germany was not a member of the League and Italy had virtually ceased to be. In his speech at the League Assembly on September 25, Mr. Eden made no reference to the Spanish Civil War.<sup>3</sup>

The Non-Intervention Committee met at a time when reports were being received of the arrival of great quantities of German and Italian arms and munitions at insurgent ports. Throughout September and October the Committee was concerned with establishing a means of supervision to prevent breaches of the Non-Intervention Agreement. When it had become clear that no arrange-

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, January 11, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons on April 12, Mr. Eden on April 14, Sir Samuel Hoare on April 20, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 322, cols. 597-9, 1136, 1677-9).

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, September 26, 1936.

ment was in sight, the Soviet government declared 'that it cannot consider itself bound by the Agreement of Non-Intervention to any greater extent than any of the remaining participants'.<sup>1</sup>

'Whatever the exact meaning of this phrase, its practical application would appear to have been that, whereas prior to that date there was little reliable evidence to show infractions of the Agreement by the Soviet government, there has since been good reason to believe that material assistance has been given to the Spanish government on a considerable scale.'<sup>2</sup>

On November 18, 1936, the German and Italian governments issued statements in identical terms recognizing General Franco's junta as the government of Spain.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Eden said that this would not affect the government's policy; recognition differed from the grant of belligerent rights, and did not prejudice the non-intervention policy. At the end of November reports began of the arrival at Cadiz of thousands of German troops complete with equipment, tanks, lorries, artillery, and aircraft; and this began a new phase in the international aspect of the war, for governmental intervention on either side in terms of man-power had hitherto been confined to technicians, such as pilots, gunners, and tank-drivers. The British government, however, reaffirmed their policy. Mr. Eden quoted Monsieur Blum's 'conviction that the non-intervention initiative saved a European war last August'. 'Is Monsieur Blum right in that conviction?' he continued. 'I, for one, am certainly not prepared to disagree with him . . . certain it is, at the very least, that this initiative and the efforts that followed it saved Europe from the gravest risk of a conflict.'<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile the Spanish government had appealed to the League under Article 11,<sup>5</sup> and the Council met to consider the appeal on December 11. Neither England nor France was represented by their foreign ministers, which precluded the possibility of any important decision,<sup>6</sup> and Señor del Vayo's appeal that non-intervention should be made effective received formal endorsement in the Council's resolution.<sup>7</sup> At the end of the year the Non-Intervention Committee began to reach a measure of agreement about a system of control to prevent intervention, though it was not until April 1937 that control was put into force. British

<sup>1</sup> Note of October 23, 1936; *The Times*, October 24, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bulletin of International News* (R.I.I.A.), December 5, 1936, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, November 19, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> Speech at Bradford, December 14, 1936; *ibid.*, December 15, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> Note of November 27, 1936; *ibid.*, November 28, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, December 9, 1936.

<sup>7</sup> Resolution of December 13, 1936.

observers were stationed on the Portuguese-Spanish frontier ; the British and French navies were to patrol the Basque coast and the coast held by the insurgents, and the German and Italian navies were to patrol Minorca and the Mediterranean coast held by the Spanish government. The observers were to have no executive powers ; their functions were to be supervisory and civilian, and they were to have no right of search or detention<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of a control system was a separate matter, in the discussions of the Non-Intervention Committee, from the prevention of the entry of further foreign troops into Spain and the withdrawal of those troops already there ; the latter was considered concurrently with the former. The British government put the Foreign Enlistment Act into force in January, and similar measures were taken by the other Powers in February. In March, however, the Italian forces in Spain were greatly increased ; when the Non-Intervention Committee attempted to consider this development, the German and Italian delegates procrastinated, and at last Count Grandi declared that in his personal view ' Italy would not withdraw any of her " volunteers " from Spain until the war had been decided by the defeat of the Spanish " Reds " '.<sup>2</sup> A deadlock ensued. In May the Spanish government appealed to the League for a re-examination of the question of foreign intervention, and published a White Book at Geneva to prove the existence of an Italian army of occupation.<sup>3</sup> On May 28 the appeal was discussed by the Council, and Mr. Eden defended British policy in a speech in which he showed complete impartiality between government and insurgents in Spain, and avoided reference to the evidence in the White Book.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile a new and grave crisis was arising. On May 29 Spanish government aeroplanes bombed the German battleship *Deutschland* off Iviza ; on May 31 German warships bombarded Almeria in reprisal, and Germany and Italy withdrew from the naval control scheme and the Non-Intervention Committee until guarantees against the recurrence of such attacks were received. On June 12, as the result of the exertions of the British government, the four controlling Powers agreed that in the event of further attacks, the attacked Power might take independent measures of self-defence on the spot, and there should be consultation between the four Powers, but if such consultation failed to produce concerted action, the Power attacked might take further independent measures for which the others would have no responsibility.<sup>5</sup> The German and Italian governments accord-

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5399 (1937).

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, March 24, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, May 28, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, May 28, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, June 14, 1937.

ingly resumed co-operation in the naval control system and the Non-Intervention Committee. On June 19, however, the German government announced torpedo attacks on the German cruiser *Leipzig*, and demanded joint action by the four Powers. The British and French insisted that the facts of the attack should first be established beyond doubt by an inquiry, but Germany demanded an immediate joint naval demonstration before Valencia as an essential condition of agreement.<sup>1</sup> This was refused,<sup>2</sup> and on June 23 the German and Italian governments withdrew finally from the naval control scheme, though remaining in the Non-Intervention Committee. This crisis followed immediately upon the capture of Bilbao by the insurgents, the resignation of the Blum government, and the cancellation of Baron von Neurath's projected visit to London.<sup>3</sup> In his first speech on foreign affairs as Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain reaffirmed the policy of the government, 'to maintain the peace of Europe by confining the war to Spain', and spoke in a conciliatory tone of the German action.<sup>4</sup>

In order to fill the gap made in the naval control system by the withdrawal of Germany and Italy, the British government produced a compromise plan on July 14, 1937, designed to meet in some degree the desires of Germany and Italy. The principal features of this plan were the discontinuance of the naval control and the establishment of international observers in Spanish ports instead, the restoration of supervision along the land frontiers, which the Portuguese and French governments had suspended, immediate measures to arrange for the withdrawal of foreign combatants from Spain, and grant of belligerent rights 'when the Non-Intervention Committee place on record their opinion that the arrangements for the withdrawal of foreign nationals are working satisfactorily and that this withdrawal has in fact made substantial progress'.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Eden defended this scheme by pointing out that it made the grant of belligerent rights conditional on the substantial withdrawal of foreign troops.<sup>6</sup> In the discussion of the British plan in the Non-Intervention Committee three conflicting views immediately appeared: the U.S.S.R. refused to consider belligerent rights until all foreign nationals had been withdrawn from Spain, Germany and Italy demanded that the grant of such rights should precede the withdrawal of foreign

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, June 23, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, June 22, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 325, col. 1029). <sup>3</sup> See p. 70 below.

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons, June 25, 1937 (*ibid.*, cols. 1545-9).

<sup>5</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5521 (1937).

<sup>6</sup> House of Commons, July 15, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 326, cols. 1594-6).

troops, and Great Britain and France insisted on the adoption of the plan in its entirety. A deadlock was reached on August 5. The submarine campaign against merchant shipping in the Mediterranean throughout August led to the Nyon Conference early in September ; and as a result of the system of naval patrol for the whole Mediterranean agreed upon there, the British and French governments decided to discontinue the original naval patrol off the Spanish coasts.<sup>1</sup>

‘ Thus, the only part of the original control scheme, put into operation at midnight on April 19–20, which remained was the provision for embarkation at specified ports of neutral observers by all ships flying the flag of non-intervention countries and bound for Spanish ports.’<sup>2</sup>

In October the British and French governments decided to make one more attempt to secure agreement through the Committee,<sup>3</sup> and the French delegate proposed an immediate token withdrawal of foreign nationals.<sup>4</sup> The Italian delegate then reopened discussion of the British plan of July. On November 4 the Committee adopted a resolution, the Soviet delegate abstaining from voting, authorizing the chairman to approach both parties in Spain in order to secure their agreement to the despatch of a commission to either side which should establish the number of foreign troops engaged and arrange for their withdrawal.<sup>5</sup> On November 16 the Soviet delegate announced that his government had withdrawn their reservations and now accepted the plan *in toto*. The Committee’s resolutions were accordingly transmitted to the two sides in Spain, and replies favourable in principle were received in the course of the following month.

When in February, 1938, the British government proposed to open negotiations with Italy for a settlement of the chief issues between the two countries, Mr. Eden resigned the Foreign Secretaryship on the grounds that no prior guarantee had been obtained from Italy for the fulfilment of her repeated pledges to withdraw her troops from Spain. In the Anglo-Italian Agreement which was concluded in April, Italy pledged herself to withdraw her forces from Spain in accordance with the British plan, or if this evacuation were not completed by the end of the war, to withdraw all her remaining forces immediately thereupon ; she also reaffirmed her denial of territorial or political aims in Spain. The Agreement was not to come into force until ‘ a settlement of

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, September 18, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bulletin of International News*, October 30, 1937, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, October 14, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, October 18, 1937. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, November 5, 1937.



the Spanish question ' had been reached.<sup>1</sup> The Agreement was concluded at the time of the insurgents' break-through on the Aragon front, and the imminence of the insurgents' victory appeared to be the assumption underlying its Spanish provisions. At the League Council meeting of May, 1938, the Spanish government stated its case for the third time at Geneva. Señor del Vayo asked for the abandonment of the non-intervention policy, and attacked the Anglo-Italian Agreement as the legislation of Italian intervention. Lord Halifax replied that there were foreign combatants on both sides in the war, and that non-intervention, with all its shortcomings, had preserved European peace.

The complete British plan for the withdrawal of foreign combatants from Spain was not accepted by the Non-Intervention Committee until July, 1938. Objections and discussions had delayed the completion of the plan since its acceptance in principle in November, 1937 : in the form in which it was finally agreed by the Committee it was, in Lord Halifax's words, ' a scheme for re-affirming and strengthening the Non-Intervention Agreement, for withdrawing foreign combatants from both sides, for granting in certain circumstances belligerent rights to both commands, and for strengthening the observation of Spanish frontiers by land and by sea '.<sup>2</sup> The broad outlines of the plan were : that two international commissions would be sent to Spain to count the foreign combatants on each side and then, all being well, they would begin a systematic and proportionate withdrawal according to a fixed time-table. When 10,000 combatants had been withdrawn from the side found to have the fewer, and proportionately more had been withdrawn from the other side, both sides would be recognized as belligerents.<sup>3</sup>

The proposals were communicated to the two parties in Spain without delay. The Republican government accepted the plan towards the end of July, making only a few criticisms which were not called reservations or conditions for acceptance.<sup>4</sup> General Franco's reply was not received in London until August 20, when it was found to accept the plan ' in principle ', but to reject the proportionate withdrawal of volunteers and to demand the immediate granting of belligerent rights.<sup>5</sup> It was therefore proposed in September to send Mr. Francis Hemming, the Secretary to the Non-Intervention Committee, to Barcelona and Burgos in order to discover more clearly what points in the plan were considered unacceptable.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5726 (1938) ; see p. 72 below.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times*, July 6, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, July 12, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, July 27, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, August 22, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> See the *Manchester Guardian*, September 3, 1938.



On September 21 Dr. Negrin, the Prime Minister of Republican Spain, announced at the meeting of the League Assembly that the Spanish Republican government had decided to withdraw all foreign combatants from its army, and would ask the League to supervise the process of withdrawal.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hemming's visit was, therefore, limited to Burgos, where he arrived on October 10. In this month Signor Mussolini ordered the withdrawal of 10,000 Italian troops from General Franco's service in order to facilitate the coming into force of the Anglo-Italian Agreement. Demands for belligerent rights were strongly expressed in Nationalist Spain as a prerequisite of any further withdrawal of foreign combatants, and Mr. Hemming's report, therefore, became the subject of further discussion<sup>2</sup> between the chief Powers of the Non-Intervention Committee.

In the meantime the Italian claims upon France, and the progress made by General Franco on the Catalan Front, gave the situation in Spain an increasingly urgent significance for European relations as a whole. The fall of Barcelona on January 26,<sup>3</sup> and the subsequent occupation of the whole of Catalonia by General Franco's forces, led to a dispersal of the Spanish Republican government and to President Azaña's flight to the Spanish Embassy at Paris. The military situation had so far outstripped the work of the Non-Intervention Committee that the question now became one of the granting of full diplomatic recognition to General Franco's administration, rather than the accordance of belligerent rights to both sides.

(iv) *The Appointment of Agents Accredited to General Franco's Administration.* On November 4, 1937, the British government announced that they had entered into negotiations for an exchange of agents with the insurgent authorities for the discussion of matters affecting British nationals and commerce.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Eden subsequently explained the motives for this move. There were millions of British capital invested in the metal mines and the sherry industry of the territory held by the insurgents, and a considerable market for British goods, particularly for coal from South Wales; the protection of these interests in time of war called for direct negotiations with the Burgos authorities; consuls could have been transferred to Burgos and Salamanca, but they would have had to receive commissions from the King and an *exequatur* from General Franco, which would have meant a measure of diplomatic recognition of the insurgents; it had there-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, September 23, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, November 22 and December 1, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XVI, No. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, November 4, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 328, cols. 1124-5).

fore been decided to exchange agents, which involved no grant of diplomatic status ; the French government had been fully informed of the British intentions.<sup>1</sup> The Opposition attacked the government's action as having no precedent and as being a step towards recognition of the insurgents. 'Although it is not recognition *de facto* or *de jure*, it is a kind of half-way house towards it.'<sup>2</sup> On November 11 a *communiqué* was issued in London announcing the exchange of agents and sub-agents, and declaring that this in no way constituted diplomatic recognition of the insurgents.<sup>3</sup> It was later announced that Sir Robert Hodgson was to be the first British agent with the insurgents,<sup>4</sup> and that the Duke of Alba was to be the first insurgent agent in London.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Rome-Berlin Axis and Franco-British Policy*

The dominant feature of European politics in the two years after the successful Italian defiance of the League and the German remilitarization of the Rhineland, was the division of Europe into the opposing *blocs* which made Spain their battle-ground. On the one side were France and the U.S.S.R., allied defensively with each other and with Czechoslovakia, and clinging to what remained of the organization of collective security under the League. On the other side were Germany, which had now become the strongest military Power in the world, and had ever-growing political and economic influence over the States of Central and Eastern Europe where her ambitions lay ; and Italy, which was endeavouring to pursue her Mediterranean ambitions without losing her own influence in Central and Eastern Europe. These two Powers were linked in the Rome-Berlin Axis, which was proclaimed by Signor Mussolini at Milan on November 1, 1936, and in the Anti-Comintern Pact, which was first concluded between Germany and Japan on November 25, 1936, and joined by Italy on November 6, 1937. The cleavage between the two *blocs* was confirmed by Italy's withdrawal from the League on December 12, 1937, and by the simultaneous German official announcement that the League had exercised only a harmful influence on world affairs, that it was no longer the highest organ of international co-operation, and that 'a return of Germany to the League will accordingly never come into consideration again'.

In this situation the aims of British policy were two : First, to

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, November 8, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 328, cols. 1384-6).

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Atlee in the House of Commons, November 8, 1937 (*ibid.*, col. 1552).

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, November 12, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, November 17, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, December 6, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 330, col. 4).

pursue her traditional rôle of mediation between the opposing *blocs* by attempting to minimize their differences and to promote negotiation and co-operation between them ; and secondly, to strengthen at the same time her own defensive ties with France. Thus on the one hand she sought to play a detached and neutral part in the ' conflict of ideologies ', but on the other hand she was compelled to align herself ever more completely with the Franco-Russian party to that conflict, through the virtual identity of European interests between herself and France.

Despite the failure of the negotiations for a Western air pact in 1935 and for a new Locarno in 1936, and the gradual disappearance of all hope of a Western settlement, the British government continued to take every opportunity of gaining contact with the German government. In June 1937 Baron von Neurath was invited to London for a general exchange of views, particularly in regard to the Spanish War ; but the German government cancelled the visit, nominally because of the *Leipzig* incident. In November Lord Halifax made the first visit of a British minister to Germany since that of Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden in 1935. His journey received the greatest attention, and there were rumours that Germany would demand a free hand in Eastern Europe in return for the suspension of her colonial claims,<sup>1</sup> which caused violent outbursts of indignation in Germany. On Lord Halifax's return, Mr. Chamberlain announced that the conversations with German ministers had been of a confidential character, but had furthered the desire for a closer mutual understanding.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately afterwards MM. Chautemps and Delbos went to London for two days' conversations, during which they were informed of the results of Lord Halifax's visit. The *communiqué* issued at the close of the discussions referred to the common interest of France and Great Britain in maintaining peace in Eastern Europe and in promoting international appeasement by methods of free and peaceful negotiation, and emphasized ' that community of attitude and outlook which so happily characterizes the relations between France and the United Kingdom '.<sup>3</sup> In April 1938, following the initiation of the Anglo-Italian conversations, the German seizure of Austria and the increased German threat to Czechoslovakia, MM. Daladier and Bonnet visited London for a second Anglo-French discussion. The decisions taken by the two Powers with regard to defence were of far-reaching importance. It was resolved to continue, as might be

<sup>1</sup> *Evening Standard*, November 13, 1937 ; *Yorkshire Post*, November 17, 1937 ; *Manchester Guardian*, November 24, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, November 24, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 329, col. 1215).

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, December 1, 1937.

necessary, the contacts between their general staffs established under the arrangement of March 19, 1936,<sup>1</sup> and to devise further methods of co-ordinating their fighting services, and especially their air forces. Collaboration was to take two forms: the development of the two air forces in close consultation, and the elaboration of joint war plans in advance. Common arrangements were to be made for buying aircraft and for storing raw materials, petrol and foodstuffs; French air bases were placed at the disposal of British forces in time of war.<sup>2</sup> It was further decided to make a joint effort to find a settlement of the problem of the German minority in Czechoslovakia, and the French reaffirmed their intention of coming to the aid of Czechoslovakia if she were attacked.<sup>3</sup> The French approved the Anglo-Italian Agreement of April 1938, and agreed to support the British, both in proposing the recognition of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia at Geneva, and in the plan of November 3, 1937, for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Spain.

It was Mr. Chamberlain's ambition, when he succeeded Lord Baldwin as Premier, to restore good relations between Great Britain and Italy. In July 1937 he sent a personal letter to Signor Mussolini reaffirming the principles of the Mediterranean agreement of January, and early in 1938 he proposed to open discussions with Italy for the settlement of all the outstanding points at issue between the two countries. On February 20 Mr. Eden resigned the Foreign Secretaryship on the grounds that withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain must precede the commencement of negotiations,<sup>4</sup> and that it was never right to negotiate with a Power which intimated that it was 'now or never'.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Chamberlain declared that there was no justification for this suggestion that the government were negotiating under threats.<sup>6</sup> The Anglo-Italian Agreement was concluded on April 16; it defined and delimited the interests of the two Powers throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and Great Britain promised to ask the League Council to remove such obstacles as impeded the recognition of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia. The Agreement was not to come into effect until a settlement of the Spanish question was achieved.<sup>7</sup> Immediately after the conclusion of the Agreement, Franco-Italian negotiations for a similar

<sup>1</sup> Official *communiqué* of April 29, 1938; *The Times*, April 30, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, April 30, 1938; *Sunday Times*, May 1, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, April 30, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons, February 21, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 332, cols. 45-50).

<sup>5</sup> Speech at Leamington, February 25, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> House of Commons, February 21, 1938 (*ibid.*, col. 59).

<sup>7</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5726 (1938).

settlement were begun, but these came to nothing as a result of Italy's attitude. At the League Council in May Lord Halifax declared that his government considered the recognition of Italy's sovereignty of Ethiopia to be a matter for each Member of the League to settle for itself. The President of the Council said that it was clear that this was the view of most of the members of the Council, but the Council did not vote on the question.

Although Signor Mussolini categorically asserted that the Rome-Berlin Axis could not be shaken and the Stresa front was dead and buried,<sup>1</sup> it was probable that the extension of German power to the Brenner confirmed in him a desire to seek alternative friendships to that on which he had relied since 1936. On the British side, it was hoped that the settlement of the quarrel between the Western democracies and Italy, and their recognition of the new Italian empire, would give Italy reason at least to remain neutral in the event of war between the Western democracies and Germany. The Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1938 was comparable in intention to the Franco-Italian agreements of 1900, the Anglo-French agreements of 1904, and the Anglo-Russian agreements of 1907; it was designed to remove all causes of disagreement, so as to provide the possibility for wider co-operation in the future.

When, therefore, in September 1938, at the height of the crisis caused by the Czech-German dispute, Signor Mussolini responded to an appeal from Mr. Chamberlain to use his influence with Herr Hitler, and his intervention was followed by the Four Power Conference at Munich, it might have been argued that Mr. Chamberlain's policy towards Italy had fully justified itself.<sup>2</sup> The Anglo-Italian Agreement was brought into force in November after the Prime Minister had announced his belief that the Spanish Civil War was no longer a menace to European peace.<sup>3</sup> The coming into force of the agreement was preceded by the withdrawal of 10,000 Italian troops, which the Duce had declared to be half the Italian infantry force, from Spain. Before the ratification of the agreement the British government formally recognized Italian East Africa, as the French had already done.

### *Summary*

The chief aim of Britain's European policy since the War has been to establish a stable condition of security based upon confi-

<sup>1</sup> In a speech at Genoa on May 14, 1938, Signor Mussolini declared that on the 'most vital issue' of the Spanish war Italy and France were 'on opposite sides of the barricades'.

<sup>2</sup> See Lord Halifax's speech in the House of Lords, November 3, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, Vol. 110, col. 1680). Italy was, of course, as much concerned as any other country to prevent a general European war.

<sup>3</sup> In the House of Commons, November 2, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 340, col. 210).



dence and co-operation between herself, France, and Germany. There have been three great obstacles to this policy : the French threat to the integrity and freedom of Germany, between 1919 and 1926 ; the threat of a rearming Germany to the Versailles settlement in Europe, between 1932 and 1936 ; and the threat of a fully rearmed Germany to France and to Great Britain herself, since 1936.

After the War, France became again for a time the dominant military Power in Europe ; and as Great Britain had reacted towards France after 1815, so now there was a slighter reaction towards Germany. When the fever of victory had passed, British public opinion, no less than British policy, became increasingly unsympathetic towards the fears that continued to inspire the French policy towards Germany. British interests required above all the economic rehabilitation of the enemy Powers. Her policy towards France, therefore, reflected alternatively the realization, on the one hand, that in conditions of modern warfare the interests of France and Great Britain were indissolubly linked, and on the other, the traditional antagonism to the strongest Power on the Continent ; Locarno effected an adjustment between the two by guaranteeing at the same time both French security and the possible victim of French aggression. Both before and after Locarno, British policy was conceived in terms of mediation between France and Germany ; Great Britain was to be the honest broker, committing herself to neither side, but endeavouring to bring them together in co-operation for the common cause of peace. It was not until after the remilitarization of the Rhineland by Germany in 1936 and her repudiation of the Locarno Treaty, that Britain was compelled to abandon this attitude of detachment and renewed her intimacy of pre-War days with France. Even then, she retained something of her attitude of detachment from the struggle for power in continental Europe, and continued her efforts to promote friendly relations between France (now allied with Russia) on the one hand, and Germany (now associated with Italy) on the other.

Before the War, the indirect danger of the German menace to French security was less important for British policy than the direct menace of German naval power. After the War, French security became the central issue of Western European politics, no less fundamental to the failure of sanctions against Italy and to the Spanish Civil War than to the Ruhr occupation. Great Britain was prepared to guarantee French security, either in concert with the United States, or by commitments limited to Western Europe. French policy, however, in its search for security, gave diplomatic expression to the indivisibility of European peace by



defensive alliances with Eastern European countries. France staked her security on preventing a new Sadowa, but Great Britain was prepared to guarantee her only against a new Sedan. This difference of aim underlay the whole course of post-War history in Western Europe from the Anglo-French tension of the early 'twenties to the failure of the Disarmament Conference, and largely nullified the policies of the Western Powers. The vast increase in the military strength of Germany, however, has made French security a matter of such immediate vital interest to Great Britain that the two Powers have established an even closer co-operation in the sphere of defence than existed at the outbreak of the Great War. In the sphere of diplomacy, too, they have reached substantial agreement, and Great Britain has so far accepted the principle of the indivisibility of European peace as consistently to pursue a 'general settlement'. In proportion as the possibility of this appears to recede, she may consent to undertake more specific commitments.

## Other European Interests

*Central and Eastern Europe*

THE Nazi Revolution in Germany in 1933 made the organization of security in Eastern Europe at once more urgent and more difficult. It brought to power a party whose immediate aims in foreign policy were the *Anschluss* and the incorporation into the Reich of all Germans who had been detached from the fatherland in 1919, and whose secondary aim was the recreation of the East European empire which Germany had won and lost at the end of the War. These ambitions, covered by the pretext of an ideological crusade against Bolshevism, turned the chief hostility of Nazi Germany against the U.S.S.R. instead of France, and found expression in the policy of a settlement in the West and a free hand in the East.

Great Britain, unlike France, had no allies in Eastern Europe, but she could not be indifferent to German ambitions. The more powerful Germany became in the East, the weaker France and Great Britain would be against German aggression in the West. British policy, therefore, was based on two principles: (i) Great Britain would accept no obligations in Eastern Europe, apart from those of the League Covenant. 'We stand by the Locarno Treaties, but we are not prepared to extend our commitments in respect of these treaties to other parts of Europe with which we are not so intimately concerned.'<sup>1</sup> (ii) But she had a clear interest in the peace of Eastern Europe. 'The fact that we have certain obligations in certain parts of Europe—I say this for the Government—does not mean that we disinterest ourselves to-day from what happens in the rest of Europe. Is there, indeed, a conflict in Europe that can be localized? If the flames are lit, will they not spread, and is not, therefore, the peace of all Europe the concern of all Europe?'<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 'our obligations under the Covenant . . . are obligations by which we abide and which we intend to implement to the utmost of our power'.<sup>3</sup> Consequently Great Britain would not acquiesce in

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Eden at Stoke, July 5, 1934; *The Times*, July 6, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, July 27, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 315, col. 1135).

<sup>3</sup> Lord Halifax in the House of Lords, April 8, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, Vol. 100, col. 523).

the German policy of a settlement in the West and a free hand in the East.<sup>1</sup>

There is a hierarchy of British interests in Europe. Western Europe takes precedence over Central and Eastern Europe ; and although Great Britain has a general concern to prevent the illegal subversion of the Versailles settlement in the latter region, she has not sought to uphold such particulars of it as the status of Memel ; and she for some years disinterested herself in the Baltic. The two main objects of her policy were to preserve the independence of Austria, and to encourage the organization of Central and Eastern European security. After the collapse of collective security under the Covenant, the former aim became unattainable, and Great Britain's policy was modified accordingly, while the conditions under which the latter aim could continue to be pursued were radically modified.

### *The Period 1933-6*

The British government repeatedly showed their interest in Austrian independence. "Time after time we have explained our considered view that Austria occupies strategically and economically a key position in Europe, and that a change in her status would shake the foundations of European peace. We shall continue, therefore, to take the closest and most sympathetic interest in the courageous efforts that her Government and people are making to maintain and strengthen her independent existence."<sup>2</sup> 'The policy of His Majesty's Government is and remains directed towards doing all that we can, by our influence and by our advice, to sustain the integrity and independence of Austria. We maintain most strictly the rule, the only wise rule, that it cannot be any part of our business to interfere with the internal government of another country, but at the same time the independence and safety of Austria are an essential object to which British policy is directed.'<sup>3</sup>

The Four Power Pact of June, 1933 emphasized Article 10 of the Covenant, which guarantees the territorial integrity and political independence of League Members. The British government considered that the Pact had come opportunely, at a time when Austrian independence was being threatened.<sup>4</sup> On August 7,

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. British Blue Book, Cmd. 5143 (1936), No. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons, July 11, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 304, col. 516).

<sup>3</sup> Sir John Simon in the House of Commons, December 21, 1933 (*ibid.*, Vol. 282, col. 1527).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, July 5, 1933 (*ibid.*, Vol. 280, col. 449-50).

1933, the French Ambassador and the British Chargé d'Affaires called at the Foreign Ministry in Berlin and invoked the Pact, stating that their governments considered that recent German propaganda against Austria was inconsistent with treaty obligations.<sup>1</sup> On September 1, 1933, the British government informed the Austrian government that they would raise no objection to the establishment by Austria of a special temporary force of 8,000 men to meet the grave circumstances in the country, foremost among which was the terrorist campaign against the Austrian government.<sup>2</sup>

On February 17, 1934, a joint *communiqué* was issued by the British, French, and Italian governments, stating that the Austrian government had asked their attitude in regard to German interference in the internal affairs of Austria, and that they took a common view of the necessity for maintaining Austria's independence and integrity in accordance with the relevant treaties.<sup>3</sup> On the occasion of the murder of Dollfuss by the Nazis in July 1934, when Italy concentrated 100,000 men on the Brenner, it was clearly seen that in the last analysis Italy was the most important of the three Powers who were concerned to maintain Austria's independence, since she was the only one contiguous with Austria, and thus the only one which could bring armed force to bear directly. The British government condemned the murder,<sup>4</sup> and on September 27, 1934, the British, French, and Italian governments reaffirmed the Declaration of February 17 and declared it would continue to inspire their common policy.<sup>5</sup> The Anglo-French Declaration of February 3, 1934, stated that the British government would consult together with France and Italy if the independence and integrity of Austria were menaced.<sup>6</sup> The joint resolution of the Stresa Conference confirmed the Declarations of February 17 and September 27, 1934.<sup>7</sup>

The British government gave their support to the French plan for extending the East European Locarno agreements of 1925 into a mutual assistance agreement on the analogy of the Western Locarno Pact. 'There is no foundation for a single word . . . said about our plans for leaving the whole of Europe to look after itself, provided we could safeguard ourselves in the West. The safeguarding of ourselves in the West is of vital importance . . . but negotiations may be futile if, when negotiations come between

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, August 8, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Note of September 1; *ibid.*, September 4, 1933.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, February 19, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> Sir John Simon in the House of Commons, July 26, 1934 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 292, col. 1943).

<sup>5</sup> *The Times*, September 28, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4798 (1935).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Cmd. 4880 (1935).

our three countries, we cannot make provision for the same security in the countries to the centre and the East of Europe as we hope to make for ourselves'.<sup>1</sup>

The proposal was first put to the British government by Monsieur Barthou in July 1934; it was for a mutual assistance pact between the U.S.S.R., the Baltic States, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany, linked to the Western Locarno system by two agreements, a Russian guarantee of the Franco-German frontier, and a French guarantee of Germany's eastern and Russia's western frontier. This was accepted by the British on four conditions: the pact must be reciprocal, and not a combination against any one Power; no obligation must be incurred by Great Britain; the U.S.S.R. must enter the League; and this opportunity must be taken for securing, if possible, a general disarmament convention including Germany.<sup>2</sup> Great Britain supported the admission of the U.S.S.R. to the League of Nations, which was voted by the Assembly on September 18, 1934. The Rome Agreement of January, 1935, proposed a Central European Pact between Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, open also to France, Poland, and Rumania, for non-interference in each others' internal affairs. The London Declaration of February 3, 1935, stated that the common policy of Great Britain and France aimed at a general settlement with Germany which should include the proposed Eastern and Central European pacts, and a Western air pact.<sup>3</sup> The British subsequently acquiesced in the French interpretation of this programme, that the Western air pact should not be negotiated apart from the Eastern and Central European pacts. In March, 1935, Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden visited Berlin, and Mr. Eden went on to Moscow, Warsaw, and Prague, in order to discover the views of these governments and to obtain support for the proposed Eastern pact. The visit to Berlin only elicited the German government's hostility to the Eastern pact; but the visit to Moscow did much to diminish the mutual suspicion that had lasted for seventeen years between Britain and the U.S.S.R. The joint resolution of the Stresa Conference reaffirmed the three Powers' approval of the Eastern and Central European pacts.<sup>4</sup> When the Italian government proposed a conference to negotiate the Central European pact, the British government decided to be represented only by an observer and not by a delegation, since it

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons, June 23, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 313, col. 1728).

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Simon in the House of Commons, July 13, 1934 (*ibid.*, Vol. 292, cols. 693-7).

<sup>3</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 4798 (1935).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Cmd. 4880 (1935).

was understood that they would undertake no new commitments in that quarter.<sup>1</sup> The conference was never held.

From May 1935 to March 1936, British diplomacy was seeking a European settlement with Germany which should include the Western air pact and the Eastern European pact.<sup>2</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare described the Eastern pact as one of the cardinal factors in the field of European progress, and said that unless it was achieved there would be great difficulty in making satisfactory progress with the air pact.<sup>3</sup> The Germans considered that the Franco-Soviet Pact made the Eastern European security pact impossible, and would offer only bilateral pacts of non-aggression.<sup>4</sup> British suspicions of this offer were expressed by Sir Austen Chamberlain: 'A purely bilateral pact of non-aggression is no guarantee, but merely leads you to eat up each morsel separately instead of having to eat them all together'.<sup>5</sup>

Great Britain's naval interests in the Baltic were affected by the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of June, 1935, whereby she recognized Germany's right to build a navy in violation of the Versailles Treaty and obtained a limitation of it in the proportion to her own of 35 : 100. In the circumstances, this gave Germany naval predominance in the Baltic Sea.

### *The Rise of Great Germany, 1936-8*

The success of the Italian aggression against Abyssinia and the German remilitarization of the Rhineland had far-reaching effects upon the European situation in general,<sup>6</sup> and upon Central and Eastern Europe in particular. The small Powers realized that they could no longer rely upon the League of Nations for security, and many of them, like Poland and Rumania,<sup>7</sup> turned towards armed neutrality, which is incompatible with collective security. In some of them, such as Yugoslavia, Greece, and Rumania, strong Fascist and pro-German influences appeared. Italy allied herself to Germany in the Rome-Berlin Axis; by this and by weakening herself through extra-European adventures, she abandoned the defence of Austria which she had championed up to 1935, and made it difficult for France and Great Britain to maintain that defence. Great Britain was deprived of effective influence in Central Europe in two ways. First, the quarrel with Italy tied

<sup>1</sup> Mr. MacDonald in the House of Commons, May 2, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 301, col. 571).

<sup>2</sup> British Blue Book, Cmd. 5143 (1936).

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, August 1, 1935 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 304, col. 2962-3).

<sup>4</sup> British Blue Book, Cmd. 5143 (1936), No. 37.

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons, April 6, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 310, col. 2503).

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 55-6 above.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Belgium and the Scandinavian countries.



up a great proportion of British armed forces in the Mediterranean, which were therefore not available for other possible theatres of conflict. Secondly, the progress of German rearmament limited Great Britain's capacity to undertake wide commitments.

(a) *The Baltic*.—The conflict in the Free City of Danzig between the High Commissioner, who represented the authority of the League, and the Nazis, whose ultimate aim was the reincorporation of Danzig in the Reich, came to a head in 1936. The League Council appointed a Committee of Three, consisting of Great Britain, France, and Portugal (later Sweden), to follow developments. The British government were at the time seeking a new Western settlement among the Locarno Powers, and were not prepared to alienate Germany by upholding the Danzig constitution. In September, 1936, therefore, the High Commissioner, whose defence of the constitution had angered the Nazis, was given a post on the League Secretariat; and in October the Council entrusted the settlement of the conflict between Danzig and the League to Poland. In effect, the status of Danzig was recognized to be a matter between Germany and Poland, and Great Britain for the time being abdicated her interest therein.

(b) *The End of Austrian Independence*.—After the collapse of the Stresa front and the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the British government did not again expressly reaffirm their interest in Austrian independence; and the view gained ground that if the *Anschluss* must come it had better come peacefully.<sup>1</sup> After the Berchtesgaden Agreement between Dr. von Schuschnigg and Herr Hitler in February, 1938, Sir John Simon emphasized that Great Britain's obligations towards Austria were only those of the League Covenant, and that she had given no special guarantee of Austrian independence.<sup>2</sup> The British government discharged their pledge under the Stresa Declaration to consult with the French and Italian governments concerning the threat to Austria<sup>3</sup>; but Italy was no longer prepared to oppose the *Anschluss*. When on March 11, 1938, Germany invaded Austria, the British government made the strongest protest against such 'coercion, backed by force, of an independent State in order to create a situation incompatible with its national independence'<sup>4</sup> and the French did likewise; but the British government were not prepared to take the matter before the League.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, March 12, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, February 21, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 332, col. 8).

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, March 14, 1938 (*ibid.*, Vol. 333, col. 51).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Butler in the House of Commons, March 14, 1938 (*ibid.*, cols. 163-4).

(c) *Central and Eastern European Security*.—Until the German annexation of Austria, Britain continued to hope for Central and Eastern European security pacts ; after that event, security in those regions became a matter not of creating new ties but of confirming existing ones. (i) After the remilitarization of the Rhineland in March, 1936, Mr. Eden reaffirmed the British desire for the strengthening of security in Eastern Europe side by side with a new Locarno for the West.<sup>1</sup> The British questionnaire to the German government in May, 1936, asked if Germany would henceforward respect the existing territorial and political status of Europe, except where modified by free agreement ; if she would agree to non-aggression pacts with her north-eastern and south-eastern neighbours, the U.S.S.R., Estonia and Latvia, in conformity with the obligations of Members of the League ; and if she would agree to non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.<sup>2</sup> In November, Mr. Chamberlain said that the Western pact for which the government were working did not involve giving Germany a free hand elsewhere ; the government wanted an Eastern pact too, and meanwhile would keep a free hand in those regions subject to League obligations.<sup>3</sup> (ii) At the time of Lord Halifax's mission to Germany in November, 1937, it was widely rumoured that there was to be a reversal of British foreign policy, and that Great Britain was to disinterest herself in Eastern Europe in return for the postponement of Germany's colonial claims.<sup>4</sup> But in the subsequent Anglo-French conversations, the two governments agreed once more upon their common interests in the maintenance of peaceful conditions in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup>

(iii) Germany's annexation of Austria in March, 1938, vastly increased her power in Eastern Europe, and emphasized the German threat to the integrity of Czechoslovakia, whose security was based on her alliances with France and Russia. In a declaration on British foreign policy after the *Anschluss*, Mr. Chamberlain referred to the questions, whether Great Britain should promise to support France in implementing French obligations under the Franco-Czechoslovak treaty, or whether she herself should give a guarantee of Czechoslovak independence and integrity. He said that the government were unable to give such guarantees, since they might automatically involve Great Britain in

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, April 6, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 310, cols. 2510-1).

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5175 (1936); see p. 58 above.

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, November 5, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 317, col. 384).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. *The Evening Standard*, November 13, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> *Communiqué* of November 30, 1937; *The Times*, December 1, 1937.

war through circumstances over which she would have no control :

‘ This position is not one that His Majesty’s Government could see their way to accept, in relation to an area where their vital interests are not concerned in the same degree as they are in the case of France and Belgium ; it is certainly not the position that results from the Covenant. . . .

‘ But while plainly stating this decision I would add this. Where peace and war are concerned, legal obligations are not alone involved, and, if war broke out, it would be unlikely to be confined to those who have assumed such obligations. It would be quite impossible to say where it would end and what governments might become involved. The inexorable pressure of facts might well prove more powerful than formal pronouncements, and in that event it would be well within the bounds of probability that other countries, besides those which were parties to the original dispute, would almost immediately become involved. This is especially true in the case of two countries like Great Britain and France, with long associations of friendship, with interests closely interwoven, devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty, and determined to uphold them.’ <sup>1</sup>

British policy in respect of the German minority in Czechoslovakia was, therefore, twofold : to urge the Czechoslovak government to make every possible effort to reach a comprehensive and lasting settlement by negotiation with the German minority’s representatives ; and to impress upon the German government the necessity for refraining from forcible intervention and of reaching such a settlement by negotiation if European peace was to be preserved.<sup>2</sup>

Such a policy was based on the assumption that, given the necessary spirit of compromise among those involved, an agreed solution could be attained. It did not itself provide for a situation in which intransigence on the part of the Czechs, the Sudeten Germans, or the Reich <sup>3</sup> would make agreement impossible.

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, March 24, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 333, cols. 1405–6).

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, May 23, 1938 (*ibid.*, Vol. 336, cols. 824–5).

<sup>3</sup> Herr Henlein had expressed the demands of the Sudeten German Party in a speech on April 23, 1938 (see *The Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XV, No. 9). In the same speech he implicitly made the Nazi government a party to the dispute by declaring that a lasting understanding with the Sudetens ‘ and with the German Reich ’ would require the Czech government to revise its foreign policy.

Negotiations between the Sudeten and the Czech governments began in June on the basis of a draft Nationalities Statute which the latter had had in preparation since the end of March, but the attitude of the German minority representatives and of the press in Germany made it increasingly necessary to envisage the possibility that agreement could not be reached.

Great Britain had consistently refused to accept any direct engagement, apart from the League Covenant, which would commit her to act in defence of Czechoslovakia if the latter were attacked. On the other hand, she clearly could not disinterest herself unless she was prepared to contemplate the possibility of a French defeat at the hands of Germany, in the event of France fulfilling her obligations under the Franco-Czech Pact of Mutual Assistance.

Great Britain had further to reckon with the fact that the whole strategic basis upon which the Franco-Czechoslovak Pact of Mutual Assistance had been concluded had undergone a radical change since these plans had originally been drawn up. The remilitarization of the Rhineland, the absorption of Austria into the Reich, and the construction of the Siegfried Line had completely altered the problem, since the Germans had attained a position which enabled them to withstand successfully any attempt at invasion from the West, whilst the difficulties of invading Czechoslovakia had been largely removed by the opening of a back door into Bohemia through Austria.

Moreover, the numerical strength of the German Army had been largely increased, and the French were faced with a new danger on their south-eastern frontier, the defence of which, against a possible Italian invasion, would have compelled France to lock up numbers of troops which had originally been earmarked for offensive action against Germany. It was, therefore, doubtful whether, in the event of an attack on Czechoslovakia, France could now render any effective military aid to her ally. When at a later stage such an attack seemed imminent, it was clearly desirable that it should not seem that France had been deterred from fulfilling her obligations under the Pact by any doubt as to Great Britain's attitude. Accordingly, on September 11, the British government issued a statement which went considerably farther than the statement of March 24 quoted above. It was to the effect that the German government should be under no illusions as to the attitude of Great Britain in case of war in which France was engaged coming as a result of an attack upon Czechoslovakia.<sup>1</sup>

By July, 1938, a deadlock had been reached in the negotiations between the Czech government and the Sudeten Germans, and

<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, September 12, 1938.

fears were entertained that the Reich would attempt armed intervention in the dispute.

Mr. Chamberlain subsequently explained the choice which the British government had to make as follows : ' . . . there were three courses that we might have adopted. Either we could have threatened to go to war with Germany if she attacked Czechoslovakia, or we could have stood aside and allowed matters to take their course, or finally we could attempt to find a peaceful settlement by means of mediation '.<sup>1</sup>

The first course Mr. Chamberlain rejected because Great Britain had no treaty obligations toward Czechoslovakia, and indeed had always refused to accept any such obligations, and because in the government's view the country would not have supported a war to prevent a minority obtaining autonomy or even from choosing to pass under some other government.<sup>2</sup> Continuing, Mr. Chamberlain said that the second course had been ruled out by the doctrine laid down by himself on March 24 and reaffirmed by Sir John Simon in his speech at Lanark on August 27<sup>3</sup>—that irrespective of treaty obligations if war broke out, it was like the beginning of a fire in a high wind, and that Great Britain was, therefore, bound to bring the whole weight of her influence to prevent the outbreak of war anywhere. The British government accordingly addressed themselves to the third course, the task of mediation : and on July 26<sup>4</sup> Mr. Chamberlain announced that Lord Runciman had been invited by the Czech government to act as mediator between themselves and their minorities.

Lord Runciman and his staff reached Prague early in August and devoted themselves to the task of bridging the gap between the Czech and Sudeten German negotiators and maintaining contact between them when disagreement became acute. It became increasingly apparent, however, that the Sudeten German party were acting in close contact with, if not on orders from, Berlin : and tension increased with the calling up of large numbers of reservists by the German government and the initiation of large-scale manœuvres in Germany in the middle of August. The intransigent attitude adopted by Herr Hitler in his speech at the close of the Nuremberg Party Rally on September 12 finally made it plain that the dispute was in essence one between the Czech government and the German government, and led to a rapid deterioration in the situation.

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, September 28, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 339, cols. 5-6).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See *The Times*, August 29, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons, July 26, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 338, cols. 2957-8).



Herr Hitler's speech included a demand for complete self-determination for the German minority in Czechoslovakia, and gave them a pledge of full support against the Czech government. It was followed by extensive disorders in the Sudetenland, involving some deaths of both Czechs and Germans. Thus by the evening of September 14 a highly critical situation had developed, in which there was a danger that German troops might cross the Czechoslovak frontier on the pretext that the Prague government was no longer in a position to maintain law and order.

Mr. Chamberlain found that one of the principal difficulties in dealing with totalitarian governments was the lack of any means of establishing contacts with those in whose hands the final decision lay. He also had reason to believe that Herr Hitler's advisers were not fully informing him and were deliberately minimizing the risks of a general war involved in a German attack upon the Czechs. He accordingly resolved to make a personal appeal to Herr Hitler and find out whether there was yet any hope of saving the peace. Mr. Chamberlain visited Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 15 and found that the position was much more acute and urgent than he had realized. Herr Hitler was determined that the Sudeten Germans must have the right of self-determination, and rather than wait he was prepared to risk a world war. After many hours' discussion, however, Herr Hitler said that if he were given an assurance that the British government accepted the principle of self-determination he would be quite ready to discuss ways and means of carrying it out.

At a meeting of the cabinet called on September 17, after the Prime Minister's return from Berchtesgaden, Lord Runciman, who had been summoned from Prague, gave it as his opinion that 'in view of recent developments, the frontier districts between Czechoslovakia and Germany in which the Sudeten Germans are in an important majority should be given the right of self-determination at once'.<sup>1</sup>

The French Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, who were invited to London on September 18, concurred in this opinion. A *communiqué* was issued that the two governments were in complete agreement as to the policy to be adopted with a view to promoting a peaceful solution and that they hoped that thereafter it would be possible to consider a more general settlement in the interests of European peace. At the same time the Czech government was urged to agree to the immediate transfer to the Reich, under international supervision, of all areas in which the Sudeten Germans represented more than 50 per cent. of the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, September 28, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 339, col. 15).



population. The Prague government at first replied by invoking the German-Czech arbitration treaty of 1926. The British and French Ministers at Prague were instructed to point out that there was no hope for a peaceful solution on this basis and to urge the Czech government to agree immediately and unconditionally to the Anglo-French proposals. This they did on the following day (September 21), though they protested that they did so only 'under the strongest pressure from Great Britain and France'.<sup>1</sup>

Describing the action taken by the government to the House of Commons, Mr. Chamberlain subsequently declared that 'the two governments were guided by a desire to find a solution which would not bring about a European war, and therefore a solution which would not automatically compel France to take action in accordance with her obligations'.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Chamberlain returned to Germany on September 22 and met Herr Hitler at Godesberg in order to inform him that the British and French governments accepted the principle of self-determination and to lay before him the Anglo-French proposals. Instead of discussing these as Mr. Chamberlain had expected, Herr Hitler presented a memorandum of counter proposals (later described by Sir John Simon as the 'brutal demands of Godesberg'). Mr. Chamberlain would undertake only to transmit these proposals to Prague and pointed out the grave difficulties in the way of their acceptance.

Mr. Chamberlain returned to London on September 24. On Sunday, September 25, the Czech government rejected the Godesberg demands as being absolutely and unconditionally unacceptable, and on September 26 the French Ministers, who had flown to London, declared that if Czechoslovakia were attacked France would feel obliged to fulfil her treaty obligations. To this the British government replied that 'if, as a result of these obligations, French forces became actively engaged in hostilities against Germany, we should feel obliged to support them'.<sup>3</sup> On the same day, September 26, while the British fleet was mobilized and other preparations made to take part in the war, which now seemed inevitable,<sup>4</sup> Mr. Chamberlain made a last effort to preserve peace, and sent Sir Horace Wilson to Berlin with a personal message to Herr Hitler suggesting that there should be immediate discussions between German and Czechoslovak representatives in the presence of British representatives. Next morning (September 27), finding Herr Hitler's views still

<sup>1</sup> Czech government statement, September 21, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 339, col. 16.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Manchester Guardian*, September 27, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Bulletin*, Vol. XV, No. 20, where also will be found the chronology of mobilization in France and Czechoslovakia.

unchanged, Sir Horace Wilson, on Mr. Chamberlain's instructions, repeated to him in precise terms the upshot of the conversations with the French Ministers, namely, that should the forces of France become actively engaged in hostilities against Germany, the British government would feel obliged to support them.

Late on the evening of September 27, Mr. Chamberlain received from Herr Hitler a written answer in which he receded somewhat from the position of the Godesberg memorandum. The Prime Minister accordingly sent one more personal message to Herr Hitler, as follows: 'After reading your letter I feel certain that you can get all essentials without war and without delay. I am ready to come to Berlin myself at once to discuss arrangements for transfer with you and representatives of the Czech government, together with representatives of France and Italy if you desire. . . . I cannot believe that you will take the responsibility of starting a world war which may end civilization, for the sake of a few days' delay in settling this long-standing problem.'<sup>1</sup> He sent also a personal message to Signor Mussolini, asking him to urge Herr Hitler to agree to his proposal.

On the same day, September 27, Mr. Chamberlain broadcast a message to the nation and the Empire in which he pointed out that the mobilization measures ordered 'do not necessarily mean that we have determined on war or that war is imminent. However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbour, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in war simply on her account. If we have to fight, it must be on larger issues than that'.

On September 28, Herr Hitler, on the advice of Signor Mussolini, followed Mr. Chamberlain's proposal with invitations to Mr. Chamberlain, Signor Mussolini, and Monsieur Daladier to meet at a Four-Power Conference at Munich the next day. At 12.30 a.m. on September 30 the four statesmen signed an agreement as to the methods to be adopted in the transfer of the Sudetenland to Germany.

With the settlement of the Czech-German dispute by means which averted actual war, and with the entry into force in November of the Anglo-Italian Agreement, the British government hoped that progress might be made along the road of 'appeasement'. Herr Hitler had renounced further territorial claims in Europe; Signor Mussolini had engaged himself to respect the *status quo* in the Mediterranean. If these engagements were given in earnest, the prospects for European peace seemed brighter than for some time past.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 339, col. 25.

It soon became apparent, however, that it would be unwise to cherish exaggerated hopes. Herr Hitler's speeches at Saarbrücken and at Weimar, which contained bitter attacks upon the democracies and upon certain British statesmen, gave no reason to hope for German collaboration in the search for 'appeasement'; Italian propaganda in support of claims in Tunis, Corsica, Nice, and French Somaliland, and for a greater share in the control of the Suez Canal, indicated that new demands might be expected as the price of a lasting agreement. Meanwhile the horror felt in Great Britain at the Jewish pogrom of November 10, following the assassination of a Secretary of the German Embassy in Paris by a young Polish Jew, and the resentment expressed in Germany at British criticism, led to a noticeable cooling in Anglo-German relations. German resentment at the acceleration of British rearmament, and British disappointment at the German failure to respond to British overtures, left the prospects for 'appeasement' at the close of the year obscure.

### *Scandinavia*

Since 1815 the Scandinavian countries have taken no part in European power-politics, and with the single exception of the Prusso-Danish War of 1863-4, have not been involved in war. In the nineteenth century their Protestantism and constitutional democracy were not a strong link with England; for Sweden, through fear of Russia, had strong political and cultural ties with Germany, though Denmark was anti-German through the loss of Schleswig-Holstein, and Norway, which separated from Sweden in 1905, has been consistently attached to Great Britain in sentiment. Before the Great War, the general economic tendency of these countries was to sell in Great Britain and to buy in Germany. Great Britain bought much of her raw materials, timber and paper pulp and Danish agricultural produce from Scandinavia without expecting reciprocity, while Germany supplied Scandinavia with manufactured goods. Great Britain did not seek North European markets until the War, when she repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to bring the Scandinavian neutrals into commercial and political alignment with the Allies.

After the War, however, the Scandinavian group as a whole adjusted their relations with Great Britain. There had been a new addition to their number when Finland became an independent State. At first Finland was dependent on Germany, who had helped her drive out the Bolshevists, but Germany immediately imposed an onerous commercial treaty which seemed to indicate the intention of reducing Finland to vassalage. After the defeat of Germany, therefore, Finland and Sweden turned towards

Great Britain, as Denmark and Norway had always done ; and a political rapprochement developed rapidly through the enthusiasm of the Scandinavian countries for the ideal of the League, of which they saw Great Britain as the champion. Their economic dependence upon Great Britain also became pronounced in the years before the world crisis. Denmark sent 80 per cent. of her exports to Great Britain ; Finland 60 per cent. ; Norway and Sweden about 30 per cent. each. But the general direction of their trade remained as before the War ; they were still less a British than a German market.

A second adjustment, an economic one, was caused by Great Britain's abandonment of free trade in 1931. She now demanded that if the Scandinavian countries wished to retain the British market, they must curtail their buying in Germany and find British firms to supply their requirements for textiles and machinery. For political as well as commercial reasons the Scandinavian countries agreed ; and a number of organizations were created for propagating the ' Buy British ' policy. The trade agreements made in 1933-4 have increased both British sales in Scandinavia and Scandinavian sales in Great Britain. The following table shows British imports from and exports to the Scandinavian countries for 1933 and 1937.

	British Imports £ millions		British Exports £ millions	
	1933	1937	1933	1937
Finland . . . . .	12·8	22·4	2·8	6·0
Sweden . . . . .	15·9	26·2	7·2	13·0
Norway . . . . .	6·9	11·6	5·6	8·9
Denmark . . . . .	35·4	36·6	11·8	16·9
	71·0	96·8	27·4	44·8

During 1933, the Scandinavian countries stabilized their currencies by joining the sterling area, which greatly facilitated international trade for the countries within that area.

British prestige suffered in Northern Europe as a result of the Hoare-Laval plan and the abandonment of sanctions in 1936, but fear of Germany and dislike of her methods of government and propaganda remain strong in Scandinavian countries. The decline of the League and the growth in Germany's power have led to a modification of the policy of the Scandinavian States, for whom a Russo-German conflict would raise grave problems. Thus Sweden and Finland have devised a plan for the partial

remilitarization of the Aaland Islands, which, situated astride the inlet to the Gulf of Bothnia, are a strategic position of the greatest importance in the Baltic.<sup>1</sup> The islands, which are predominantly Swedish-speaking, were allotted to Finland by the League Council and neutralized by an International Convention in 1921. The new arrangement, while attempting to preserve the spirit of the original Convention, provides for joint defensive plans and preparations by Sweden and Finland, with the object of preventing the islands falling into the hands of a great Power.

Since 1933, Swedish iron has acquired political importance, as Germany has made use of the rich phosphoriferous ores from Lapland to carry out her rearmament programme, and there is an increasing possibility that Russia, though she does not need the ore herself, might seek to divert it from Germany. From 1936 onwards Great Britain has also come to need Swedish ore, especially as the conquest of Asturias and the Basque Provinces by General Franco has diverted the mineral resources of North Spain to Germany. Sweden has a bigger export of iron ore than any country in the world. France, the United States, and the U.S.S.R. have a bigger output, but they consume a far greater proportion of it domestically.

Sweden is thus in a dominating position in the world market for iron ore.

The ore is situated mainly in two regions. North Lapland, within the arctic circle, has more than nine-tenths of Europe's total resources of high-percentage iron ore, an amount estimated at over 2 milliards of tons. In 1936 two-thirds of the Swedish output was mined here, and the ore from these mines was almost exclusively used for export. The harbours used for the export of this ore are Narvik on the west coast of Norway and Luleå in Sweden itself on the Gulf of Bothnia. More than half Sweden's exports of iron ore are shipped through Narvik; Luleå is blocked by ice for three-quarters of the year. There are important deposits, though smaller and less valuable than those of Lapland, in Central Sweden, especially the Bergslagen field. This ore is less rich in iron than the Lapland ore, but has greater purity, and is mostly used for home consumption. Recently operations have been resumed on a number of inferior mines in Central and South Sweden, largely through the exertions of German and British prospectors.

About 85 per cent. of Sweden's export of iron ore is controlled by the great trust, Trafikaktiebolag Grangesberg-Oxelösund (T.G.O.), and a subsidiary of this concern, the Luossavaara-Kirunavaara Aktie Bolag (L.K.A.B.), owns almost all the mines

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, January 5 and 8, 1939.



in the Lapland district. The State acquired half the shares of the L.K.A.B. in 1901, and can nationalize the Lapland industry in 1947 or earlier, if necessary, by purchasing the other half of the shares, held by the T.G.O., if 'foreign influences are found to exert an improper hold on the company'. This is, however, unlikely, as the State already has effective control over the iron industry in its power to appoint half the directors of the T.G.O.

The following table shows the export of iron ore in millions of tons :

1929	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
10.9	2.2	3.1	6.8	7.7	11.2	13.9

Until 1935 three-quarters of these exports went to Germany, and the rest to Great Britain and U.S.A. Sweden is, however, unwilling to remain dependent upon the German market as it might endanger her neutrality in the event of war. Also she is not certain that the clearing agreement with Germany, which has worked well so far, will be a permanent success. The German share of Swedish iron exports declined from 73 per cent. in 1934 to 71 per cent. in 1935 and 1936, while the British share rose from 773,000 tons in 1935 to 1,231,000 in 1936. Later in that year Great Britain began negotiations with the T.G.O.

The Swedish government welcomed Great Britain's desire to increase her imports of Swedish iron ore ; it might be considered 'as good as a British pledge of Swedish neutrality and independence'.<sup>1</sup> The government decided to raise the export limit, and, at the same time, stated that German exports were not to increase beyond the figure for 1937. The greater part of the increased exports will therefore go to Great Britain and the possibility has been left open of progressive cuts in exports to Germany.

Other important products of Scandinavia are timber and wood-pulp. These are the second most important item in Sweden's exports, and practically the sole important export from Finland.

### *The U.S.S.R.*

The total area of the U.S.S.R. is 8,242,000 square miles, of which only 1,492,000 square miles, or approximately 18 per cent. of the whole, lie inside Europe. Although it is in the European areas that the bulk of the population lives, the fact remains that historically, geographically, and culturally, Russia is only partly European, and acts as a link between Europe and Asia. The last twenty years have given this function more prominence than ever, owing to the growth of Russian industrialization, the tendency to

<sup>1</sup> Joachim Joesten, 'The Scramble for Swedish Iron Ore,' *Political Quarterly*, January-March, 1938, p. 66.



shift the economic centre of gravity eastwards, and the equality of opportunity offered to all nationalities living inside the Soviet boundaries. Such a connecting link is naturally of importance to Great Britain, a European State possessed of vast interests in Asia. Moreover, the difficulties of Great Britain's present position largely arise from the fact that she is concerned in all the potential storm-centres of world politics, the Far East, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean. In this respect no other major Power resembles her so closely as does Russia, which is directly concerned with the first two areas.

As is pointed out in other sections, the British Empire's main strategic line runs through the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Straits of Malacca to Hong Kong and Australia. Parallel with this line and to the north of it there runs the main Russian strategic line, from the Black Sea and the Gulf of Finland along the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok, with a branch from Samara which joins the Transcaspian Railway at Samarkand, and gives access to two railheads on the northern frontiers of Afghanistan. Those geographical dispositions have made the friendship or hostility of Russia for decades a factor of high importance in determining British policy, because an unfriendly Russia can mean a permanent threat to British security, particularly in the four following areas :

(i) Control of the exit from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles was for long a main object of Russian policy, since the ice-bound condition of the northern Russian ports during the winter made an effective warm-water port particularly desirable. England, afraid of Russian interference in the Eastern Mediterranean, strenuously resisted the Russian attempts to control Constantinople, and the conflict led to a general struggle for influence in the Balkans and Asia Minor. Since 1917, the Russian government has relaxed its efforts in this direction, so that the problem has not recently been acute.

(ii) From both sides of the Caspian Sea, Russia is able to exert pressure on Iran, and so can reach down to affect British spheres of influence in 'Iraq and the Persian Gulf.

(iii) Through Afghanistan and (to a lesser extent) Tibet, Russia has in the past and might possibly in the future threaten the security of the northern frontier of India.

(iv) China is bordered on the north for a considerable distance by Russia, and British interests in China have at times been thought to be in danger from Russian pressure. The wish to keep this pressure in check was indirectly responsible for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, but the subsequent increase in the power and ambitions of Japan has materially altered the position.

Russia is also of importance to Great Britain because she is an important source (actual or potential) of raw materials, such as timber, oil, gold, grain, and cotton, which Great Britain needs, while the low standard of life and vast population of Russia would make her (if conditions allowed) a promising market for capital and manufactured goods.

Before considering the relations between Russia and Great Britain in more detail, it would be well to examine the developments which have taken place since 1917 in the relations between the Communist government in Russia and the rest of the world. For only by making clear the changes which have taken place in the situation of Russia can the attitudes successively adopted by Russia towards Great Britain be understood.

Whereas in 1919 the Allied States as a whole did not believe that the Russian Revolutionary government would manage to maintain itself for much longer, orthodox Marxist theory would never seem to have considered the possibilities of revolution succeeding in one country alone, so that the Russian leaders were hoping (and working) for an immediate World Revolution. Both sides had good grounds for their beliefs. At the beginning of 1919 there were no less than eight anti-Bolshevik expeditions on Russian soil, most of which were encouraged and some indeed organized by the Allied governments; on the other hand, a Communist government was set up for a short time in Hungary, while Germany, Italy, China and many other countries which had been overstrained by the War were in a highly unsettled condition. Each side thought that the dissolution of the others was inevitable in the near future, and neither desired to reach a *modus vivendi*.

Gradually the situation cleared. By the time of the battle of Warsaw (August 1920), the process of driving hostile troops off Russian territory had been brought to a conclusion. It became possible in Russia to relax some of the vigour of state control, introduced in 'War-time Communism' from the sheer need of winning the war, and Lenin, acting on the principle *reculer pour mieux sauter*, temporarily abandoned to private enterprise some of the less important spheres of economic activity, such as distribution. It was at this stage (March 1921) that the first Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement was signed; Great Britain, however, still refused diplomatic recognition.

Soon after it became clear to the world that the immediate collapse of Communist Russia could not be expected, it also became clear to Russia that a world revolution was improbable in the near future. With the victory of Fascism in Italy in 1922, and the failure of the last Communist rising in Germany in 1923, the prospects of a Communist Europe faded into the distance.

This led to a conflict of policy inside Russia, which was accentuated by Lenin's death in 1923.

In the ensuing contest for the succession, Trotsky, who maintained that Communism could never be firmly established in Russia unless it succeeded elsewhere as well, and that therefore Russia must do all in her power to stir up revolution abroad, was defeated by Stalin, with his policy of ' Socialism in a single State '. This policy not only involved a recognition that to work for revolution elsewhere would for the time being be waste of energy, but proposed to ensure the success of Communism in Russia by a vast programme of industrial development which would absorb all available energy for the immediate future. Incidentally Lenin's New Economic Policy was to be brought to an end and private enterprise once again liquidated ; the consequent introduction of state control in all directions meant a great increase in the authority of the Communist leaders. When the programme was completed Russia would have become a first-class industrial (and therefore military) Power, but in the interval a foreign attack would be highly embarrassing and hard to resist. The Russian government had therefore every reason to avoid giving foreign countries reasons for attacking it ; and although, being bound in theory to the Marxist creed, they could not openly renounce the aim of overthrowing capitalism everywhere, they did in fact steadily curtail the activities of the Comintern from about 1927 onwards.<sup>1</sup>

The industrial programme required for its execution vast quantities of capital. It seems probable that, if foreign investors had been ready to lend their money to the Soviet government, that government might have overcome its fears of foreign control sufficiently to borrow abroad. But loans could not be arranged on terms which were satisfactory to both parties, and the Russians were forced to pay for the capital goods which they required and were unable to produce at home by increasing their export surplus. With that object in view the government utilized its monopoly over foreign trade to flood outside markets with goods at prices which, being fixed without any necessary relation to production costs, were able to undercut competitors. The practice aroused indignation among foreign producers, and contributed not a little to strain Anglo-Russian relations. But although a monopolistic State can revert to the same policy at any time, and indeed will always be inclined to pay greater attention to the state of the market than to production costs in deciding the prices of its exports, the undercutting has tended to grow less serious as Russia's needs of

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the previous relations between the Russian government and the Comintern, see *Survey of International Affairs for 1924*, pp. 161-198.

machinery, etc., have gradually been supplied, and she has reached a position in which she is better able to meet her own requirements.

Russian fear of foreign attack has increased with the extension of Japanese activity in East Asia, and with the victory of National Socialism in Germany, especially as the governments of both these countries had made much of the danger of Communist agitation in their territories. In November 1936 this common antagonism to Russia took concrete shape in the Anti-Comintern Pact (joined twelve months later by Italy). The conclusion of this pact was from one aspect a reply to the action of Russia who, fearing Japanese and still more German hostility, had drawn closer to the democratic States, since these also seemed opposed to the German-Italian-Japanese *bloc*. The rapprochement was marked in 1934 by the entry of Russia into the League of Nations, and in 1935 by the conclusion of alliances with France and with Czechoslovakia. This development led to a further change of direction in Communist activity outside Russia, since it was clearly bad policy to stir up trouble for the governments of States on which Russia might have to rely in war. Moreover, Moscow was beginning to recognize the part which the refusal of the Communists to co-operate with other radical parties had played in bringing about a Fascist victory in Italy and Germany. Accordingly, in France and elsewhere the Communist parties were instructed to support bourgeois governments and press for an increase in national armaments. This development has been less definite in Great Britain, which is not a direct ally of the U.S.S.R.

In the opinion of some observers, the internal development of Russia is tending to throw up a 'bourgeoisie' of managers and officials who possess sufficient privileges to make them highly content with the *status quo*, and have no wish to realize more completely the professed goal of social and economic equality. It is possible to regard the various purges as part of a process by which all who desire to change the present state of affairs are being rooted out. Such an interpretation lends colour to the belief that the revolutionary period in Russia is over, and that henceforward her rulers will only seek to conserve the gains which the revolution has brought them. On the other hand, the purges seem to mark a check in that extension of the liberties of the subject to which the government seemed inclined some two years ago, and which would have given it a form slightly more akin to the constitutions of France and Great Britain.

Even if the Russian government is not prepared directly to instigate revolution in other countries, it must be anxious to see régimes similar to its own established abroad, especially as those

régimes will tend to be friendly towards it. The Comintern has continued to take an active interest in countries like Spain and Mexico which were not in the normal course likely to be valuable allies for Russia in a future war. The actual existence of a country in which Communism is (theoretically) practised cannot fail to provide a stimulus to working-class movements in every country. It is particularly noteworthy that as recently as February 14, 1938, Stalin published a statement in the Russian newspaper *Pravda* which suggested that the victory of Socialism in Russia was not yet final and could only be completed by world revolution.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the Trade Agreement of 1921, Great Britain did not recognize Soviet Russia until the Labour Party took office in 1924. A trade treaty was drawn up in that year, but had not been signed when the Campbell case and Zinoviev letter led to a General Election at which the Conservative Party was victorious. The part which resentment of subversive Communist activities had played in this victory made signature of the treaty out of the question and relations were not improved by the financial support given by Russia to British Trade Unionists during the industrial disputes of 1926. It was not until the Labour Party returned to power in 1929 that negotiations were resumed, and a trade treaty was not ratified till 1930. The National government of 1931 continued to observe this treaty, but it was denounced in March 1933 when the trial on a charge of sabotage of some British engineers employed in Russia by Metropolitan-Vickers Ltd. led to a dispute between the British and Russian governments. This time the breach was not of long duration, and a fresh treaty was signed in February 1934. This treaty is still in force.

Trading relations with the U.S.S.R. are affected by the low prices and spasmodic character of Russian exports, which prevent them from being a reliable source of supply, and have an unsettling effect on the market. Thus the fall in world wheat prices after 1928 was accentuated by the sudden appearance, after a long interval, of Russian supplies. Clauses had also to be inserted in the Anglo-Canadian Ottawa agreement to prevent Soviet exports of timber from disturbing the British market and embarrassing Canadian producers. Russia has in the past imported large quantities of machinery and other capital goods, and she still does make such imports, but their chief object is to enable her to be self-sufficient in future and, instead of opening prospects of a regular trade with Great Britain, they do just the reverse. More-

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XV, No. 4. It was subsequently stated that this article had been misinterpreted abroad and that Stalin was only demanding a Communist revolution in the Fascist countries.



over, of recent years Russian production of cheap manufactured goods has grown sufficiently to enable her to enter the foreign market in the Baltic States and the Near East as a competitor with other manufacturing countries, and naturally she inclines to cut prices in order to capture the market. Difficulties have also arisen in the application of the most-favoured-nation clause, which was included in both the 1930 and the 1934 agreements, since in a country where all trade is in government hands, the granting of equal conditions for imports from different countries is comparatively valueless if the government does not make its purchases from these countries in proportionate amounts. Clauses were inserted in the 1934 treaty to meet both these difficulties. If either party was thought to be creating artificially low prices abroad, the other was entitled to make representations and would be free to denounce the treaty if satisfaction were not obtained. Russia further promised to devote an increasing proportion of the foreign exchange derived from exports to Great Britain to the purchase of British goods, until in 1938 an approximate balance of payments should be attained. But according to the figures which are available,<sup>1</sup> this result has not been achieved.

British Trade with Russia (in £ millions).

Year		U.K. Imports	U.K. Exports	U.K. Re-exports
1934	. .	17.3	3.6	3.9
1935	. .	21.7	3.5	6.2
1936	. .	18.9	3.5	9.8
1937	. .	29.1	3.1	16.4
1938	. .	19.5	6.4	11.0

Political relations between Great Britain and Russia were for long complicated by the dispute as to whether the activities of the Comintern in other countries were separate from and beyond the control of the Soviet government (as that government asserted) or distinct only in theory (as the British government maintained). British suspicions of course rose highest when the Comintern was most favourably regarded by the Russian government ; grave mistrust was aroused by its activities inside the British Empire, especially in the Near East and India. The Communist persecution of religion also alienated many who might have been disposed to feel sympathy towards the professed social aims of the régime. Consequently, although the star of the Comintern has waned, and Russia seems to have abandoned active attempts to stir up revolution in the British Empire, British suspicions have been slow to evaporate. There is a feeling that the abandonment of revolution can only be a temporary tactical measure, that Russian policy aims not so much at avoiding war as at precipitating a war

<sup>1</sup> British Trade and Navigational Returns.



in which she herself will not be involved, in the hope that the result of that war will be general revolution. Should, however, a war arise in which Russia was immediately involved, her geographical position, combined with the Franco-Soviet Pact,<sup>1</sup> is considered likely to extend that war, whether it breaks out in Eastern Europe or in the Far East, to Western Europe, the area which directly concerns Great Britain.

Yet there are several reasons which make it to the interest of Great Britain to seek friendship with Russia. The U.S.S.R. to-day, in comparison with the other countries of the world, is probably a stronger military Power than Tsarist Russia was in 1914 ; in this respect industrialization, and the relative invulnerability of Russia's industrial centres, have been of great importance, although the purges may have had a reverse effect. There are those in Germany who, inspired by the teaching of Bismarck, believe that the wise policy for their country lies in a Russian Alliance. Russo-German relations were exceedingly close in the days of the Weimar Republic, and since 1933 they have not perhaps been as cool as appearances might suggest. The danger to Great Britain of such a combination might be very great.

It is questionable how far Great Britain could hope to reach a decisive victory in any struggle with Germany unless the German eastern frontier could be blockaded by land, and also questionable how far the help of Central European and Danubian States would be available or adequate for this purpose. Accordingly, the active assistance of Russia (and not merely her neutrality, which would not involve her co-operation in such a blockade) might be of great importance to Great Britain. Moreover, the man-power of Russia could supplement British resources in a direction in which they tend to be deficient, should it ever become a question of defeating Germany by land. (Against this consideration there must, however, be set : (a) the probable reluctance of the Russian government to employ their forces outside their own territories, and (b) the possibility that the Russian forces would prove deficient in organization, equipment, and transport.) Finally, Russia could bring help to the common cause in an area, the Far East, where Great Britain is particularly in need of it. Underlying such calculations is of course a hypothesis of questionable validity, namely, that a conflict is inevitable between Great Britain and the signatories of the Anti-Comintern Pact. For that reason, it is perhaps in relation to this Pact that the rival views which obtain in England with regard to Russia can best be summed up.

There is on the one hand a body of British opinion which

<sup>1</sup> The significance of the Franco-Soviet Pact has become a matter for speculation since the events of September 1938.

believes that the main obstacle which obstructs the ambitions of the signatories to the Pact is not so much Communism as the democracies in general and, in particular, the world hegemony which has been exercised in the past by the three great democratic States of Great Britain, France and the U.S.A. To most of those who hold this view the Russian government appears as a form of democracy, at least by comparison with the Fascist system, and therefore they are inclined on all grounds to regard Russia as an ally who should be welcomed. Others, struck by the numerous similarities between Fascism and Communism, regard the Pact as symbolizing a clash between two extremes, which both conflict with the democratic ideal, and tend for that very reason to meet. The harshness and 'purges' of the Soviet régime arouse particular disgust among this school of thought, some members of which admittedly feel more sympathy with Fascism than with Communism. They maintain that it is not in Great Britain's interest to ally herself with either extreme against the other.

Which of these two attitudes is correct must remain for the present at any rate a matter of opinion, but the contrast between them has the merit of showing that the relations between Great Britain and Russia can only be judged in relation to other and broader issues.

## SECTION II

### *THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST*

#### CHAPTER V

#### Mediterranean Interests

##### *Historical Survey to 1918*

GREAT BRITAIN has three main interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East<sup>1</sup>—commercial, political, and imperial—each bound up with the others, but roughly corresponding to three phases of development.

In the later Middle Ages England had an increasing trade with the great Italian cities, Genoa, Pisa, and Venice, and with the Levantine termini of the land-routes to the East, which ran across the Suez isthmus from Alexandria to the Red Sea, and from Damascus and Aleppo down the Euphrates to the Persian Gulf. The Italian trade declined in the sixteenth century, but the Levant trade remained important until the construction of the Suez Canal.

At the same time as England's trade in the Mediterranean was decreasing in proportion to her trade as a whole, the development of European power-politics gave her new political relations with Mediterranean States, and led her to establish her naval power and acquire naval bases in the Mediterranean. These considerations of power in regard to European politics became Great Britain's main interest in the Mediterranean. The establishment of her naval supremacy in the Mediterranean doubled her weight in European politics, by extending her power from the north-western to the southern coasts of the Continent.<sup>2</sup> She cannot make her power

<sup>1</sup> *The Middle East* is used here to describe the roughly triangular region bounded on the west by the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, on the south-east by the Arabian Sea and the frontiers of the Indian empire, and on the north by the frontiers of Turkey and the U.S.S.R. *The Near East* is used to describe the lands bordering the eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt, and those which in 1914 were part of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gerard Fiennes, *Sea Power and Freedom* (1917): 'Some further reason is required to account for the deeply-rooted instinct which caused us to cling so tenaciously to the Mediterranean. The true answer sounds almost paradoxical. It was in the Mediterranean that we defended our age-long interest, the freedom of the Low Countries. The vital spot of mid-European strategy lies on the Middle Danube. It was there that the contest between the House of Hapsburg and the House of Bourbon must be fought out, and the easiest route for the French thereto lay through Italy, much of which at this

directly felt in the interior of Europe ; but her navy has controlled the Mediterranean as it has controlled the North Sea, it has attacked Toulon as it has attacked Brest, it has landed expeditionary forces in Catalonia and Gallipoli as in Flanders, it has coerced Greece as it has coerced Denmark.

After the founding of the British Empire in India, the Mediterranean and the Near East became important as a secondary route to the East, alternative to that round the Cape of Good Hope. When the Suez Canal was opened in 1869 this route superseded the Cape route as the chief line of communication with the East. The development of this vital British interest in the Near East led to the extension of political power to Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf, and in a lesser degree to Persia and Afghanistan ; and the dictates of strategy have thereby involved Great Britain in unforeseen political complications of the widest importance.<sup>1</sup>

The discovery of the New World and of the sea-routes to the Indies at the end of the fifteenth century transferred the commercial centre of Europe from the Italian cities of the Mediterranean to the Spanish, Dutch, and English cities of the Atlantic seaboard. Spain seized command of the Mediterranean from the Ottoman Empire at Lepanto in 1571, and held it until the defeat of the Armada in 1588, so that in the long war between Spain and England the English navy did not pass the Gibraltar Straits. But the merchants of the Levant Company traded with Venice and her Empire, and with the Moslem world, where they were welcomed as enemies of Spain ; and they fought actions against Spanish galleys and the Barbary pirates who preyed upon shipping along the Algerian coast. In 1623 James I sent an expedition against these pirates, which was unsuccessful. But the foundations of English naval command of the Mediterranean were laid by the Protectorate. Blake first took the English navy into the Mediterranean in pursuit of Rupert's fleet in 1650 ; he appeared there again in 1654-5 to protect English merchants and to add weight to Cromwell's diplomacy. The extension of English naval power to the Mediterranean could not be confirmed without naval

time was a Bourbon possession. But Italy is a peninsula, and the route could never be safe for the French unless they possessed command of the sea. It was, then, to prevent the French from enjoying command of the Mediterranean and thus securing their communications with the Middle Danube that, almost at any cost, we held on to a position so remote from our home bases' (pp. 146-7).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. W. Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe* (Cambridge, 1937) : ' . . . No less than eleven times in the last hundred years were we involved in major international crises, owing to complications in the Near East. Neither the Iberian nor the Italian Peninsula, neither Germany nor the Hapsburg Monarchy, have proved to be so persistently and inextricably interwoven with every imaginable issue of foreign policy, as have the issues involved in the fate of Turkey and her former vassals ' (pp. 648-9).

bases ; Cromwell discussed with Monk and Montagu the advantages of seizing either Tangier or Gibraltar ; and in 1654 England made her alliance with Portugal, which protected her communications with the Mediterranean, and gave her a bridge-head against Spain comparable to her more important bridge-head in the Netherlands against France. At the Restoration this alliance brought England Tangier, as Catherine of Braganza's dowry ; but in 1684, owing to the expense of maintaining it, Charles II gave it back to the Moors.

It was part of the greatness of William III and Marlborough to see the importance of the Mediterranean, and their wars established British predominance there. In 1690 the French fleet was superior to the Dutch and English, but after the battle of La Hogue in 1692 England gained the supremacy both in the Atlantic and the western Mediterranean, which was the basis of her European strategy and made it possible for

‘ the pressure of the British fleet to be brought to bear on hesitating States at moments of diplomatic crisis. In William's reign the allied fleet saved Barcelona and prolonged the resistance of Spain against Louis. During the Marlborough wars, our alliance with Portugal and rebellious Catalonia, and our whole war-policy in the Mediterranean and in Spain, depended on our naval supremacy in those seas, of which Gibraltar and Minorca were pledges taken and kept. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

Gibraltar was seized in 1704, but by itself it was important only as a station for the protection of commerce. Since it could then accommodate no more than a cruiser squadron, it was useless for the command of the Mediterranean unless supplemented by a real naval port where a fleet could receive its winter refit.<sup>2</sup> The acquisition of Port Mahon in 1708 supplied this need for England, giving her a port where she could maintain a force superior to the French fleet at Toulon. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 confirmed her possession of these bases, and acknowledged her mastery of the western Mediterranean. It was threatened in the next few years by Spain, whose power was revived by the genius of Alberoni ; but in 1718 Byng destroyed the Spanish fleet at Cape Passaro, which was Great Britain's first great action in the Mediterranean, and illustrated the eastward extension of her naval power.

Throughout the eighteenth century England maintained her position in the Mediterranean without improving it : from Gib-

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *History of England*, p. 488.

<sup>2</sup> See J. S. Corbett, *England in the Mediterranean*, Vol. II, pp. 286-7.



raltar and Minorca she could command the Mediterranean coasts of Spain, France and Italy, which was her chief purpose. The loss of Minorca in 1756 weighed nothing against Chatham's conquests in America and India ; and she retained Gibraltar even during the disasters of the American War. But at the end of the century she lost the command of the Mediterranean to Revolutionary France, the ally of Spain and the conqueror of Italy. In 1796 the union of States was accomplished which Marlborough had fought to prevent, and for more than a year the Mediterranean remained a French lake. The British fleet re-entered it in 1798, but failed to prevent Bonaparte from seizing Malta and landing in Egypt. The Battle of the Nile was a decisive reversal. Nelson not only restored the supremacy that England had lost ; he extended it, at a blow, to the whole of the eastern Mediterranean. His victory was confirmed in 1800 by the capture of Malta, as La Hogue had been confirmed by the capture of Gibraltar. For the rest of the war British control of the Mediterranean was not threatened, and it enabled the rulers of Savoy and Naples to find safe refuge on their islands of Sardinia and Sicily. At the peace of Vienna England retained Malta and the Ionian Isles.

The Battle of the Nile opened the Middle East to Great Britain. This region, occupied at that date by the declining States of Turkey and Persia, became of vital interest to her with the founding of an empire in India. Until 1869 the main route to India was the sea-route round the Cape of Good Hope, which Great Britain controlled by reason of her maritime supremacy ; but there was an alternative land-route through Syria and Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf, which was controlled by Turkey ; and it became a principle of British policy to prevent any great Power from dominating it, and thereby short-circuiting the Cape route to India. Such a danger was apprehended from France and Russia. France considered herself to have a traditional interest in Syria dating from the Frankish kingdom of Jerusalem, as protector of Latin Christianity in the East : she had a traditional alliance with Turkey against the Hapsburgs ; and she was Great Britain's rival in India. Russia began to exert a steady pressure upon Turkey and Persia from the time of Peter the Great ; the Russo-Turkish War of 1736-9 was the beginning of her struggle to acquire her natural frontiers on the south ; and the Treaty of Kustchuk-Kainaidji in 1774 marked the end of Turkey as a great Power. When Great Britain became an Asiatic Power in the second half of the eighteenth century, the expansion of Russia and the ambitions of France became the two chief external factors in determining her policy.

In the nineteenth century the centre of gravity of Mediterranean politics shifted eastwards from the Balearics to the Levant. In the west, Spain had ceased to be a great Power, and France was growing weaker in comparison with the rising States of Central and Eastern Europe ; in the east, Russia was steadily moving towards Constantinople, and hastening the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. It was now Great Britain's chief Mediterranean aim to prevent Russia from becoming a Mediterranean Power. Canning supported the cause of Greek independence in 1823 in order that it should not be established by Russia alone ; and the history of the Straits question was the history of British efforts to prevent the Russian fleet from gaining free access to the Mediterranean. The height of Great Britain's accomplishment of this aim was the Treaty of Paris of 1856 after the Crimean War, which neutralized the Black Sea and forbade Russia to maintain on it naval or military establishments. Russia repudiated these provisions in 1870 when England was preoccupied with the Franco-Prussian War ; but Disraeli checked her again at the Berlin Congress in 1878, and thenceforward her progress towards Constantinople was hindered less by Great Britain than by the *Drang nach Osten* of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

In 1863 Great Britain surrendered the Ionian Islands to Greece, having held them for half a century through fear lest Russia or France might acquire Corfu. As in the western Mediterranean, after the loss of Minorca a century before, Britain was left with no base east of Gibraltar, so now in the eastern Mediterranean she was left with no base or potential base east of Malta ; and during the crisis of 1876-8 her fleet lay in an open roadstead off the Turkish coast at Besika Bay. At the Berlin Congress, therefore, she acquired for herself the island of Cyprus. Disraeli's main object in taking Cyprus, however, was to establish a British protectorate through the Near East from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. But this was not achieved before the War ; and the British fleet gained better harbours than those of Cyprus through the occupation of Egypt four years later.

In 1782 Joseph II and Catherine the Great had considered offering Egypt to France, if she would abandon her Turkish alliance. In 1798 Bonaparte seized Alexandria, defeated the Mamelukes, and advanced into Syria, with the intention of reaching India. This design, which was defeated by Nelson at Aboukir Bay and Sidney Smith at Acre, remained one of Napoleon's ultimate aims ; and it was in resistance to his diplomacy between 1807 and 1812, which sought the partition of the Ottoman Empire, that England, through the agency of Stratford Canning, first took on the rôle of protector of Turkey. The more prominent

aspect of the Eastern Question, which thus appeared in British foreign policy, was resistance to Russian encroachment upon European Turkey ; but equally important for England was the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire in Asia and Africa, or, failing that, the acquisition of its fragments by England herself rather than by another Power. For Turkey was nominal sovereign of the important routes across the Suez isthmus and down the Euphrates, and after 1869 of the much more important Suez Canal. In the first half of the nineteenth century these land-routes were threatened by Mehemet Ali, the Pasha of Egypt, who conquered the Hejaz and Syria. Palmerston strongly opposed him ; ' Turkey ', he wrote, ' is as good an occupier of the road to India as an active Arabian Sovereign would be ' ;<sup>1</sup> in 1837 Great Britain bought Aden, to counter Mehemet's partial conquest of Arabia, and in 1840 the fleet bombarded Beirut and Acre, and drove Mehemet's forces from Syria. Mehemet had been supported throughout by France, and Palmerston's success over ' the Syrian question ' prevented the establishment of a Franco-Egyptian sphere from the Levant to the Persian Gulf. In the second half of the century the clash of French and British ambitions centred about the Suez Canal. Palmerston resisted De Lesseps' project, seeing it as another French design upon Egypt ; but this failure of British policy was richly compensated, for the shortening of the route to the East caused a tenfold increase of British trade. It also transferred to Egypt most of the strategic importance that had hitherto belonged to the Cape of Good Hope. In 1876 Disraeli made Great Britain the chief shareholder in the Canal by buying up the Khedive's shares, and thereby gave her a new interest and standing in Egypt. This led to the British occupation in 1882, when Great Britain suppressed an outbreak of Egyptian nationalism single-handed, since France was too afraid of her danger from Germany to co-operate.

' Where France, the second continental Power, had shivered on the brink and abandoned the fruits of a seventy-year effort, Great Britain had jumped in and finished her affair in two months.'<sup>2</sup>

Her hold of the west coast of the Red Sea was consolidated by the reconquest of the Sudan in 1898.

A danger to Great Britain, at least as great as the establishment of a French sphere of influence in the Levant and Syria, was the

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Sir William Temple, April 19, 1833 ; quoted in *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, Vol. II, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. K. Ensor, *England, 1870-1914*, pp. 79-80.

establishment of a Russian sphere of influence in Persia and Afghanistan. Under equal pressure from north and south, Afghanistan became a buffer-state, whose existence prevented open conflict between Great Britain and Asiatic Russia, at the expense of two British wars upon Afghanistan herself to ensure the predominance at Kabul of British over Russian influences. It was easier to prevent Russia's advance towards the Punjab than her advance towards the Persian Gulf. The latter was the more dangerous, for the physical and political obstacles were smaller, and the main object of Russia's southward expansion was not territorial aggrandisement but the reaching of warm-water harbours. Russian control of the Gulf, however, would have been a direct threat to India ; Great Britain therefore established a protectorate over the coastal sheikhs of the Gulf, and claimed general control over the whole coastline from Aden to Baluchistan, irrespective of its sovereignty. An agreement of 1853 gave her the right to suppress piracy and enforce peace among the Trucial chiefs ; another of 1892 forbade them to conclude treaties with, or to cede territory to, any other Power ; in 1903 Lansdowne announced that the establishment of a naval base or fortified port on the Gulf by any Power would mean war, and Curzon, who was Viceroy of India, ordered an impressive demonstration in its waters. The long conflict between Great Britain and Russia was ended by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which divided Persia into three spheres of influence, the northern Russian, the southern British, and the central one neutral.

At the end of the nineteenth century there appeared a new threat to British interests in the Near East, unimagined fifty years before. This was the extension of German influence in the Ottoman Empire, and the projected construction by Germany of the first trunk railway through Asiatic Turkey from Constantinople to Baghdad. In 1903 Germany offered Great Britain a share in the control of the proposed railway ; German and French financiers were in agreement to co-operate. Great Britain had to consider whether the shortest route to India should be wholly in foreign hands, and whether the terminus of the railway should be at Kuwait, a British protectorate. Balfour desired the whole line to be international, with equal rates and powers of construction, control, and management for Germany, France and England.

‘ I think,’ he said, ‘ that this great international artery should be in the hands of three Powers rather than of two or one. It is to our interest that countries which we cannot absorb should not be absorbed by others.’ <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, April 8, 1903.

Germany, who had begun the enterprise, was not prepared to give a majority of shares to England and France; 'in asking so high a price for co-operation' England virtually 'declined the invitation'.<sup>1</sup> In the years that followed, the Baghdad railway became a source of Anglo-German friction second only to naval competition. In 1914 an agreement was reached, whereby the railway was to end at Basrah, and not to be extended farther without British consent; but all Mesopotamia north of Basrah was in effect recognized to be within the German sphere of influence.

Great Britain was supreme in the Mediterranean from 1798 until 1912, when she made the arrangement with France that concentrated French naval strength in the Mediterranean and British naval strength in the North Sea. The most important use of this supremacy in the western Mediterranean was the benevolent intervention of the British fleet in favour of Garibaldi's expedition to Sicily and Naples, which made possible the union of Italy. The appearance of a new and a wholly Mediterranean great Power was, for three-quarters of a century, not considered to endanger Great Britain's Mediterranean interests. Italy was bound to Great Britain by a traditional gratitude and friendship; the difficulty of defending her immensely long coastline was a surety of her good relations with the dominant naval Mediterranean Power. The Triple Alliance between Italy, Germany and Austria expressly declared that it was not in any case directed against England, and when the War came Italy, as had been expected, jointed the Entente. The Allies maintained their Mediterranean supremacy without difficulty, and used it to compel Greece to join them, and to promote the various campaigns in the Dardanelles, Salonika, Egypt, Palestine, Arabia and Mesopotamia. On the other hand, the dangers of the Mediterranean route to the East were shown by the immense destruction of commerce achieved by a very small number of German submarines.

'Owing in part to geographical peculiarities and in part to divided command, the Mediterranean was from the naval point of view our blackest "distressed area" in the Great War. To the very end we never succeeded in scotching the U-boat menace there. Our shipping losses through submarine attacks were proportionately far heavier in the Mediterranean than in any other war zone. Out of a total of nearly 13,000,000 tons of British, allied, and neutral merchant shipping destroyed by enemy action throughout the War, 5,000,000 tons were lost in the Mediterranean alone.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, Vol. III, p. 301.

<sup>2</sup> H. Bywater, *International Affairs* (R.I.I.A.), May 1937, p. 371.



The War showed that the submarine was an unprecedentedly dangerous threat to British command of the Mediterranean ; there has since been added the bomber. ' Thereby the 100-mile canal from Suez to Port Said has been extended into a 2,000-mile " canal " from Port Said to Gibraltar.' <sup>1</sup>

The decision of Turkey to join the Central Powers brought the whole of the Near East into the area of conflict, and led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Following Turkey's action, Great Britain deposed the Khedive, declared Egypt a protectorate, and faced a Turkish attack upon the Suez Canal. The military defeat of Turkey was achieved on three fronts : in Mesopotamia, in Arabia, and in Palestine, which was decisive. But the conflict between Turkey and Great Britain and France set loose three contradictory political forces : the traditional imperialist ambitions of the Allies in regard to the partition of Asiatic Turkey, the Arabs' hostility to Turkey and desire for independence, and the desire of world Zionism for a Jewish national home in Palestine. Hence a number of agreements among the Allies themselves and promises by them to Arabs and Jews, which have determined the subsequent political history of the Arabic world. At the end of the War, France became mandatory for Syria, and Great Britain for 'Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan ; and there was thus established that control by the British Empire and its ally of the land-route to the Persian Gulf and India, which was the logical fulfilment of the British policy of the past 150 years.

### *Gibraltar*

In 1704 Gibraltar was captured by a British fleet and, despite many efforts to retake it, has remained to this day one of the key positions in the network of Imperial defence. It is a strongly armed fortress overlooking the fifteen-mile wide passage between Europe and Africa, and situated on the western shore of a small peninsula. In area the colony is just under two square miles, and in 1936 had an estimated population <sup>2</sup> of 16,875 (including refugees from the Spanish Civil War) ; there are also some 2,300 Spaniards who work in the colony, but who live across the ' lines '. The military character of this dependency has had considerable influence upon the form of government to which it is subject, and which might be described as a military autocracy ; the Governor-General (who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the garrison) has legislative powers and is assisted by an Executive Council.

In the days of sailing ships, the control exercised by Gibraltar over the Straits was even more effective than it is to-day ; for

<sup>1</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *Europe in Arms*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Colonial Report for Gibraltar (1936).

adverse winds and currents forced vessels to hug the Spanish coast and creep by under the guns of the fortress. The Great War introduced two new weapons into the control of the Straits, namely, the submarine and the aeroplane. The Straits of Gibraltar form one of three focal points where Mediterranean shipping routes converge, and it is obvious that such a bottle-neck affords unrivalled opportunities for attack by submarines and torpedo-craft based on Gibraltar. Gibraltar has now considerable facilities as a naval base ; the Admiralty harbour is 440 acres in extent and there are three large graving docks and one small dock, besides supplies of equipment and fuel. The existence of this naval base gives Great Britain certain advantages in patrolling the Straits and mine-sweeping, and makes Gibraltar a convenient point for assembling convoys for the Mediterranean route : in addition, a fleet operating from such a base could command the two eastern Atlantic trade routes, from Europe to South America, and via the Cape to Australia and the East. Communication between the Mediterranean Fleet and the Home Fleet is reasonably assured if Great Britain holds Gibraltar, and also the French and Spanish naval bases of Toulon and Cartagena are thus separated from those at Brest and Cadiz.

From its massive profile and long tradition as a bulwark of Empire, the Rock of Gibraltar has been invested with an aura of impregnability, not altogether justified in view of the changes that have occurred in modern warfare. The British hold on Gibraltar depends in no small measure on the absence of hostile forces in Spain and in Morocco ; it is alleged that ' in the event of war with Spain siege guns could subject Gibraltar to continuous bombardment, and aeroplanes could bomb it from Algeria and Morocco. The Rock would be untenable in a war against Spain and exceedingly unpleasant to live on in a war against France.' <sup>1</sup> The Admiralty harbour can be commanded by guns on the heights behind Algeçiras, and the existing French air-base at Oran is only 250 miles away. It is true that these considerations are based upon the supposed hostility of France and Spain, a contingency that has not arisen since the Napoleonic wars ; but recent events in Spain have emphasized the dangers that might arise if some parts of their territories were occupied in time of war by a potential enemy. The very nature of the Rock debars it from use as an aircraft base, except by such units of the Fleet Air Arm as may be on board visiting vessels of the Mediterranean Fleet.

It may not be out of place at this point to consider the vexed question of the proposal to exchange Gibraltar for Ceuta. It has been argued with great eloquence and persuasion that since Gib-

<sup>1</sup> Vice-Admiral C. V. Usborne, *The Times*, September 22, 1936.

raltar is so vulnerable to aerial attack and since there is no hope of building an aerodrome either upon the Rock or upon adjacent Spanish territory, whence such attack could be met by fighting planes, Great Britain should cast aside sentiment and negotiate with Spain for the cession of Ceuta and a portion of the hinterland. An offer of this nature has been made twice by Spanish statesmen, once in 1927 by Primo de Rivera and a year later by Count Romanones. In each case it was refused, but the step still has advocates in Great Britain. The principal advantage that would accrue from this transfer of territory is the opportunity of establishing a considerable air-base which could furnish aerial patrol of the Straits, to supplement the existing naval command. In opposition to this it is said that having territory abutting on Spanish Morocco, Great Britain would become entangled in Moroccan affairs and that there would be a longer land frontier to defend ; for the enclave round Ceuta would have to be of at least twenty miles radius, if the base was to be safeguarded against the effects of long-range shelling. From such a base as this the Straits of Gibraltar could be guarded far more effectively and bombing attacks could be returned in kind. An official announcement <sup>1</sup> to the effect that No. 1 graving dock at Gibraltar has been enlarged to hold any capital ship built, or likely to be built, seems to point to the retention of Gibraltar as the British base in the western Mediterranean.

In July, 1937, there was some concern in Great Britain at the erection by General Franco's forces of heavy guns overlooking the Bay of Algeçiras, and commanding the north and west sides of the Gibraltar peninsula. In 1878 Great Britain had signed a 'gentleman's agreement' with the Spanish government, guaranteeing to keep the Bay of Algeçiras open to shipping, if Spain should be attacked ; the possibility of a civil war was not envisaged in this document, and General Franco was therefore free to ensure the safe passage of his troopships from Morocco by mounting these guns. In spite of statements by the British government that this armament does not in the present circumstances constitute a threat to Gibraltar, there is no doubt that guns could be mounted in this position which might be used to bombard the harbour. The present garrison of Gibraltar consists of 1 heavy brigade R.A. ; 2 fortress companies R.E. ; 2 battalions of infantry and the Gibraltar Signal Section ; there are in addition its fixed defences and the ancillary personnel.<sup>2</sup>

In matters of trade Gibraltar is primarily concerned with providing coal, oil, water and stores for shipping, and in 1934, 2,656 vessels took 484,169 tons of bunker coal ; the total number

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, October 20, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Army List*, October 1938.

of ships that called that year was 6,751. The colony itself produces nothing marketable, though ship-repairing is an activity of considerable importance. Apart from a fresh-water supply, the Rock is entirely dependent upon its imports for every commodity, and the majority of these are seaborne. Gibraltar is only 1,050 miles from Plymouth and 991 miles from Malta, so that reinforcements and supplies could be sent very quickly in an emergency. It must be stressed in conclusion that the value of Gibraltar to Great Britain and the security of her tenure of the Rock must depend very largely upon the friendship or enmity of those who hold Spain and Morocco. Should those territories fall into the hands of, or become available to, a hostile Power, her route through the Mediterranean might be cut, and her communications with the Cape of Good Hope would be seriously endangered.

### *Malta*

The Maltese islands are five in number and are situated in the maritime defile between Sicily and Cape Bon in Tunisia. Malta itself is the largest of the islands, being some ninety-five square miles in area, and Gozo (twenty-five square miles) is the only other which is inhabited. Gibraltar is 991 miles distant, Port Said 936, and London about 2,300 by sea. The estimated population in 1933 was 251,832, giving a density of 2,327 to the square mile, and as the annual increase is in the region of 3,000, Malta is faced with the problem of over-population.<sup>1</sup> The number of foreigners is 948, and the non-civilian population numbers some 17,000. The presence of the Services is the dominant factor in the economic and social life of the island.

Malta has undergone many vicissitudes in its form of government since the Great War. The Constitution granted in 1921 worked with varying degrees of success until 1927, when political interference by religious leaders began to give trouble. The Constitution was suspended in 1930, restored in 1932, and again suspended in 1933. Crown Colony government with a Governor and an Executive Council but no Legislative Council was established in 1936. English and Maltese are both official languages. In March, 1938, a case was brought by Lord Strickland against the Crown, in which the Maltese Court of Appeal ruled *ultra vires* all enactments under this régime. Leave of appeal to the Privy Council was granted and the case was considered by the Judicial Committee in June and July, 1938. The Privy Council allowed the appeal against the judgment of the Maltese Court, thereby establishing the validity of the legislative acts of the Crown Colony

<sup>1</sup> D.O.T. *Report* for Malta (1935).

Government.<sup>1</sup> On July 29 Mr. Malcolm MacDonald announced in the House of Commons that a new Constitution was in preparation for Malta, which would 'afford the people of the Colony a considerable measure of participation in the conduct of their own affairs'.<sup>2</sup>

But it is as an aero-naval base and the headquarters of the British Mediterranean Fleet that Malta is of such importance to Great Britain. The Grand Harbour of Valetta is one of the finest in the world and is equipped with graving docks, a large floating dock, oil tanks, and naval supplies. Geographically speaking, Malta is situated in an ideal position to command the narrow passage between Sicily and Cape Bon (less than a hundred miles wide), through which practically all Mediterranean shipping must pass. But, as in the case of Gibraltar, the development of the bombing aeroplane has made a once redoubtable fortress peculiarly susceptible to attack. In this respect Malta is better equipped to defend itself, having two air-bases (one for flying-boats at Kalafrana and an aerodrome at Hal Far), whence bombing-raids can be counter-attacked and returned in kind. The unsuitability of Valetta as a haven for a fleet threatened from the air was apparent in August, 1936, when the Mediterranean Fleet steamed out of harbour and made for Alexandria. The coast of Sicily is only sixty miles or perhaps twenty minutes' flying from Valetta, and assuming that only a small percentage of the attacking force were to penetrate the anti-aircraft defences, considerable damage could be done to a fleet lying in the harbour which was unprepared for an immediate exit. Even should the fleet successfully put to sea, it is more than probable that the mouth of the harbour would be surrounded by submarines, though the harbour itself is protected by a submarine boom. Malta is within bombing range of five Italian aero-naval bases and one French base,<sup>3</sup> so that there is the additional risk, even in the absence of the fleet, of the destruction from the air of oil-tanks, docks and other facilities for repairing and maintaining warships.

The small island of Pantellaria, which lies even more centrally in the passage between Africa and Sicily than does Malta, was

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, July 26, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. MacDonald went on to say that a Legislature would be set up, 'to be known as the Council of Government' and to be 'composed of eight official members, two unofficial members nominated by the Governor at his discretion, and ten elected members. The Governor will preside over the Council and will have a casting but not an original vote. Ministers of Religion will not be eligible for election as members of the Council' (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 338, col. 3472). Discussion of defence matters might be restricted if the Governor considered it desirable, and language questions would be excluded from discussion or control by the Council of Government.

<sup>3</sup> Italian bases: Cagliari (Sardinia), Taranto, Augusta (Sicily), Pantellaria, and Tripoli; French base at Bizerta.



fortified in 1937-8 ; and it was announced, officially, in Rome in May, 1937, that the Mediterranean islands were being developed as bases. These fortifications are of little significance and of no importance to Malta, for which Sicily, being only half the distance away, is a far more likely source of danger.

The remaining two Italian islands are Linosa, sixty-five miles south-east of Pantellaria and seventy miles west of Malta : it has no harbour, but there is anchorage off the south and east coasts ; and Lampedusa, twenty-four miles to the south-west of Linosa, which has somewhat better anchorage facilities.

Operating from Valetta, the British Mediterranean Fleet is charged with ensuring a safe passage through the Inland Sea for British commerce and troopships plying between England and Asia and Australasia. As at present constituted, the Mediterranean Fleet consists of the following principal vessels : <sup>1</sup> The 1st Battle Squadron (2 battleships) ; the Battle Cruiser Squadron (2 ships) ; the 1st and 3rd Cruiser Squadrons (6 ships), 1 Flotilla Leader, 4 Flotillas of Destroyers (32 ships), 1 Flotilla of Submarines (8 ships), and 1 Flotilla of M.T.B.s (6 ships). There are in addition minesweepers, depot and supply ships. The Fleet Air Arm is represented by H.M.S. *Glorious*. Hal Far is the shore station for H.M.S. *Glorious*, for whose aircraft there is accommodation, and has in addition to the Station Flight one Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit.<sup>2</sup>

Being an island, Malta is dependent upon seaborne supplies, the defence of which rests with the navy. The island has, however, a military garrison which may also provide a reserve to be used in case of an emergency in another part of the Mediterranean. This was demonstrated in the case of Palestine in 1929 and Cyprus in 1931, when troops were quickly brought from Malta in cruisers.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of writing there is no alternative base immediately available. Haifa is under Mandate and thus cannot be fortified as a naval base ; Alexandria is in a foreign country, though such facilities as it affords would be available to Great Britain in accordance with Article 7 of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty in time of war or apprehended international emergency. The development of Famagusta, still in embryo as a naval and air base, has been arrested by the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1938, and in any case none of these potential bases enjoys the same advantages of position as Malta.

<sup>1</sup> *Navy List*, October 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Air Force List*, November 1938.

<sup>3</sup> The infantry garrison has fluctuated during the past few years, according to the demand for reinforcements for other garrisons in the eastern Mediterranean.

*Cyprus*

Cyprus is an island situated in the north-eastern end of the Mediterranean about sixty miles west of the Syrian coast, forty miles south of Asia Minor and 300 miles north of Egypt (Port Said). In area it is nearly 3,600 square miles ; its geographical structure may be briefly described as consisting of two mountain ranges, one running along the north coast of the island, the other extending from the centre to the west coast, between which lies the fertile plain of Mesaoria. There are no rivers, and even the mountain streams are dry for the greater part of the year. The capital is Nicosia (24,000), in the centre of the island, and the principal ports are Famagusta, Limassol, and Larnaca. In 1936 the estimated population was 369,091. About 65,000 were Moslems of Turkish origin and the remainder are almost all Christians of the Autocephalous Church of Cyprus, a branch of the Orthodox Eastern Church. The principal languages are a dialect of modern Greek and Osmanli Turkish, while among the business classes English is widely understood.

Great Britain obtained control of the island from Turkey in 1878 on the understanding that she would defend the Asiatic possessions of the Porte from Russian aggression. On the entry of Turkey into the War in 1914, the island was declared a Protectorate, and in 1925 it was given the status of a colony, with a Crown Colony form of government. The Legislative Council was, however, abolished in 1931, subsequent to the rioting which occurred that year, and the business of government is at present carried on by the Governor, assisted by an Executive Council.

From the time of its acquisition until about two years ago, the strategic value of Cyprus was regarded as being purely negative in character ; inasmuch as the fact that it was a British colony debarred any other Power from using it as a base in an offensive against British interests in the eastern Mediterranean. The island has no natural harbour capable of use as a naval base, and the main flying routes have so far chosen Alexandria as their half-way house to the East and South Africa. Its proximity to the focal point of shipping routes off Port Said, coupled with the opening of the pipe-line to Haifa and the Italian fortification of Leros in the Dodecanese, have all conspired to bring Cyprus into the limelight as a possible naval and air station. Apart from its general strategic value as a continuation of the Gibraltar-Malta line of outposts, Cyprus is very closely connected with Great Britain's imports of oil ; a large proportion of such imports come from Iran through the Suez Canal, from 'Iraq through the Haifa pipe-line, and from Russia and Rumania, through the Dardanelles

and the Ægean Sea. All these routes could be patrolled from Cyprus, before they enter the Maltese zone of control. Being some 420 miles from the Italian base at Leros, it is further removed from any potentially hostile air station than any other British outpost in the Mediterranean. At the moment the defence of the island is entrusted to one company of infantry detached from a battalion serving in Egypt. In August 1936 Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham visited Cyprus with a view to inspecting suitable sites for aerodromes and seaplane stations, and a year later it was announced that work on an air-base had started. Both Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Duff Cooper when First Lord of the Admiralty paid visits to the island and took note of its physical advantages as a potential base.<sup>1</sup> The existing harbour at Famagusta is capable of accommodating ships up to 7,000 tons, and the possibility of its development has been described as follows :

‘ The commercial harbour has a quay-wall 1,800 feet long, a dredged basin 24 feet deep (L.W.O.S.T.), and an average width of 600 feet ; this is the only part of the reef-protected lagoon which has been dredged ; it does not silt up. The reef that protects the lagoon continues outside the present harbour parallel with the shore for about one and two-fifths sea miles. Were a breakwater built on the reef at a cost of less than a million [pounds] it would enclose an area of water 38–48 feet deep and fourth-fifths of a sea mile in length, of an average width of 1,800 feet. This would accommodate battleships. Nearer the entrance of the commercial harbour, a shallower area 2,300 feet long and about 2,000 feet wide would be enclosed. This would accommodate destroyers, submarines, and light cruisers. Deep water extends to within five or six hundred feet of the shore.’<sup>2</sup>

Estimates of the cost of such construction vary widely, but seem to range between £1 million and £3 million. The central plain provides abundant sites for aerodromes, which could be laid out with a minimum amount of levelling if draining operations are undertaken. The salt lake at Limassol furnishes an admirable stretch of water for a flying-boat and sea-plane station, and if necessary a short channel could be cut connecting it with the open sea. It is as an alternative Middle East air-junction that

<sup>1</sup> By Annexe 2 of the Anglo-Italian Agreement the British government agreed to notify the Italian government in advance of any decision to provide new naval or air bases east of longitude 19° E., and this provision would cover works in Cyprus.

<sup>2</sup> *Crown Colonist*, December 1937.

Cyprus competes with Egypt, and for a short time in 1931 Imperial Airways had an emergency landing-place near Nicosia. From Athens to Nicosia is thirty miles shorter than to Cairo, and from Athens to Rutbah Wells is 150 miles shorter via Cyprus than by Alexandria and Goza. The ports of Larnaca and Limassol have no anchorage facilities save in open roadsteads : the former is connected with Alexandria by cable.

Since 1928 Cyprus has been required to make an annual contribution of £10,000 to Imperial Defence, in return for the payment by Great Britain of the Cyprus share of the Turkish Debt Charge, which amounts to £92,800 per annum.

The somewhat negative policy that has been adopted towards Cyprus in the past has not corresponded to the island's potential value. Its claims as a naval and air base in the eastern Mediterranean have already been considered, and when the new aerodrome at Larnaca is completed it may well become a junction for civil air-lines. The island's economy is based primarily upon agriculture, though mining is an increasingly important activity ; in 1936 Cyprus was responsible for 4·7 per cent. of world-production in pyrites, of which the British Empire's share was 5·8 per cent.

Cyprus is an island of great possibilities. Its natural resources await further development and its name has been mentioned recently in connexion with the establishment of a British University for the Near East. These and similar projects would be greatly advanced by the extension of communications, both internally and externally, especially in the shape of steamship services to other parts of the Mediterranean and to the United Kingdom.

### *Egypt and the Sudan*

The part that Egypt has played in British foreign policy dates from the acquisition by Great Britain of trade and land concessions in the East ; from the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte ; from the settling of Australia and New Zealand, and especially from the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The shortest sea-route between Great Britain and the Dominions and British possessions in Asia and in the Pacific area lies through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, and he who holds Egypt holds the Canal. It has, therefore, been a cardinal point in Britain's policy never to allow any foreign Power to control Egypt, or to interfere with her strategical arrangements in that area. Equally important has been the maintenance of a stable régime in Egypt itself, and of good relations with that country ; for in addition to being the territorial Power concerned in the Suez Canal, it has become the main junction of the Imperial air-routes between Great Britain and India, Australia, and South Africa.

The military occupation of Egypt began in 1882, and was still in existence at the outbreak of the Great War, though technically Egypt was still a province of the Ottoman Empire. With the entry of Turkey into the War in November 1914, the Khedive was deposed and a Protectorate declared.

The War brought prosperity to Egypt : the price of cotton rose to fantastic heights, and the presence of British troops stimulated trade. But it brought, too, discontent and a growing resentment of the British occupation, which entailed the requisitioning of labour and supplies. Anti-British Egyptian nationalism was born during these years, and soon after the War it found an energetic and uncompromising champion in Zaghlul Pasha. In 1919 there was a very strong feeling that the position in Egypt should be regularized and a permanent settlement sought. Broadly speaking, there were three possible solutions :

(i) The Protectorate might be maintained, but Egypt should not be incorporated within the Empire.

(ii) Egypt might be brought within the Empire and given a certain measure of self-government.

(iii) The Protectorate might be abolished, and Egypt as an independent nation should enter into an alliance with Great Britain, the terms of which would satisfy Great Britain's requirements.

The Milner Mission, sent out in 1919, found in favour of abolishing the Protectorate and contracting a bilateral treaty, but in the subsequent conversations these proposals were rejected. The next milestone in Egyptian history was Lord Allenby's Declaration of February 1922, by which Egypt became an independent sovereign State, but with four matters reserved to the discretion of the British government. They were the defence of Imperial communications ; the defence of Egypt ; the protection of foreign interests and minorities ; and the future administration of the Sudan. In 1923 a bi-cameral constitution modelled on that of Belgium was enacted ; it was abrogated in 1928 and restored in 1935.<sup>1</sup> In the next few years frequent conversations were held between Egyptian and British statesmen, and in 1927 a draft treaty was agreed upon by Sir Austen Chamberlain and Sarwat Pasha, but was later rejected on the grounds that it made

<sup>1</sup> Parliament consists of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. The King, who appoints and dismisses Ministers, nominates the President of the Senate and two-fifths of its members ; the remaining three-fifths are elected by universal suffrage, one Senator to 180,000 inhabitants. In the Lower House the Deputies are elected by universal suffrage, one to 60,000 inhabitants, with a mandate for five years.



no provision for the withdrawal of British troops. In 1930 a further draft treaty was considered by Mr. Arthur Henderson and Nahas Pasha, in which settlement was reached upon all the reserved points of 1922, save only the Sudan; and upon that rock the negotiations foundered.

For the next five years Egypt was living under a Palace dictatorship. In 1930 changes to the 1923 electoral law had been promulgated in a new Constitution which functioned successfully till 1934, when King Fuad abolished it. The 1923 Constitution was restored in October 1935. By this time the situation was overshadowed by Italy's conflict with Abyssinia, which had forced Egyptian politicians to reconsider their attitude towards Great Britain, and in December 1935 the High Commissioner received a Note from the leaders of a United Front, asking that negotiations should be reopened on the basis of the 1930 Treaty. The Note contained references to certain obstacles to Egypt's development which they wished to settle, and which were listed in the following order :

- (i) The Capitulations.<sup>1</sup>
- (ii) The existence of European direction in the Department of Public Security.
- (iii) The lack of an adequate army.
- (iv) The exclusion of Egypt from the international concert.

There was no reference to the Sudan. The British reply expressed the wish to enter into negotiations immediately but thought it desirable to begin with the categories which had given most difficulty in 1930, i.e. the military questions and the Sudan. Developments in Abyssinia had rendered impracticable the military clauses of the 1930 Treaty (which envisaged a limitation to the existing strength of the British forces in Egypt) and had given a new strategic importance to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. By the Treaty of 1936 a military alliance is contracted between Great Britain and Egypt, by the terms of which the King of Egypt will furnish his ally with 'all the facilities and assistance in his power, including the use of his ports, aerodromes, and means of communication'.<sup>2</sup> The military provisions of the Treaty—in particular those which relinquished control of Alexandria and Cairo—are discussed in detail below.

Control of the Sudan has always been of considerable strategic importance to the British Empire, and as British authority in

<sup>1</sup> These were a system of legal and fiscal privileges conferred upon foreigners, which involved the establishment of Consular and other special courts.

<sup>2</sup> Articles 4 and 7.

Egypt diminishes, so does this importance increase. Egyptian nationalism, however, had long contended that owing to the Sudan's position in respect of the Nile and the Suez Canal, the two countries should by rights be one kingdom. The status of the Sudan had been defined by the Anglo-Egyptian Convention of 1899 which established a Condominium. The terms of the Convention declared that Great Britain was 'by right of conquest' entitled 'to share in the administration and development of the Sudan'. The country was to be an Anglo-Egyptian protectorate virtually controlled by Great Britain, though the administration was British and Sudanese. Supreme military and civil power was vested in the Governor-General, who was appointed by the King of Egypt on the recommendation of the British government. By Article 11 of the 1936 Treaty it was agreed that the Sudan should continue to be subject to the régime set up in 1899, that Egyptian troops, withdrawn after the murder of the Sirdar, Sir Lee Stack, in 1924, should return, and that Egyptian immigration be unrestricted save for reasons of health and public order.<sup>1</sup> Egypt has nevertheless not abandoned her claim to sovereignty over the Sudan, and both the High Contracting Parties have reserved the liberty to negotiate new agreements in the future. The Governor-General will continue to be appointed by the King of Egypt on the recommendation of the British government.

Article 12 of the Treaty provided for the protection of foreign interests in Egypt and Article 13 promised British support for any action taken to abolish the Capitulations; by the signature of a Convention at Montreux on May 8, 1937, this final obstacle to Egypt's sovereignty was removed.

The Treaty of 1936 is in its main provisions similar to that so nearly concluded in 1930. There are, however, certain changes, mostly in the form of amplifications, to which attention must be drawn. These changes may be divided into those affecting the main principles of the Treaty and those concerned with matters of detail only. As to the first, the previous draft provided for the establishment of an alliance between the two governments, but a special stipulation is now included that, in the event of the terms of the Treaty being revised at a later date, the Alliance should not be terminated—in fact, that 'any revision will provide for the continuation of the Alliance between the High Contracting Parties . . . .' The principle of the permanence of the Alliance is, therefore, established. Taking the Articles severally, Nos. 1 to 10 inclusive are almost identical, though numbered differently, with Articles in the 1930 draft; but there are a few significant additions. For example, an 'apprehended international emer-

<sup>1</sup> Immigration was one of the main stumbling-blocks in 1930.

gency ' is added to the eventualities which will be the occasion of the furnishing of aid to the British government by the Egyptian government, while it is also specifically mentioned that the measures taken by the latter would include, if necessary, the establishment of martial law and an effective censorship.

With the signature of the Treaty and the abolition of the Capitulations, Egypt stood before the world as an independent sovereign State for the first time for some two thousand years. Henceforth, the play of domestic politics in Egypt is a concern of Great Britain only in so far as it may affect the internal security of the country. Great Britain's principal requirement from the point of view of Imperial defence is a strong and stable Egyptian government with which she can treat with some confidence, and which can be relied upon to evoke the support of the Egyptian people.

The problem of internal security, which is one aspect of the problem of Imperial defence in Egypt may be said to have been left almost unchanged by the Treaty of 1936. On the other hand, the other main aspect of the defence problem, that of security from external attack, has completely altered in the last three years ; changes in the international situation were reflected in the military provisions of the Treaty, the results of which it may be of interest to summarize here. It was thought before 1935 that the problem of defence against external attack was mainly a naval responsibility, since Egypt was flanked by two natural buffers—the uninhabited deserts of Sinai and Libya—and covered on the South by the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which was not likely itself to be an object of attack. This position has naturally been greatly modified by Italy's conquest of Abyssinia and by her conversion of Libya into a military base which might be used to launch an attack upon Egypt.

The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty provides that the British forces in future will be concentrated in the Canal zone, but to ensure effective co-ordination with the Egyptian army, Egypt has undertaken to construct a number of roads, bridges, and railways suitable for use by military forces : notably roads from Ismailia to Alexandria, from Ismailia to Cairo, from Port Said to Suez, from the Cairo-Suez road to the Great Bitter Lakes, from Cairo up the Nile to Kena and Kus, from Kus to Kosseir, and from Kena to Hurghada. The effect of these last-mentioned roads is to link the towns of the Upper Nile with the Red Sea ports of Kosseir and Hurghada. The railway-line between Zagazig and Tanta will be doubled, and the line between Alexandria and Mersa-Matruh <sup>1</sup> will be made

<sup>1</sup> One hundred and forty miles from the Libyan frontier, and nearest outpost to it.

permanent. The troops will be stationed between Kantara and Suez along the railway, and round Ismailia and Moascar. The removal of the British forces will not take place till 1944, by which time adequate accommodation (including a water-supply) will have been provided by the Egyptian government. Until that time they will continue to be stationed at Alexandria, Cairo and Ismailia. By clause 8 of the Treaty, the land forces are not to exceed 10,000, but the Royal Air Force is allowed a strength of 400 pilots : this is a considerable detachment, and in view of the important part the Royal Air Force would play in hostilities over such a wide area as Egypt affords, the disposition of units deserves closer attention.

Cairo is the headquarters of the Royal Air Force Middle East Command, which embraces all stations in Egypt but not those at Ramleh and Sarafand, which are now under the direction of G.O.C. British forces in Palestine and Transjordan. No. 4 Flying Training School is at Abu Sueir ; there is a Port detachment at Alexandria, an R.A.F. Depot at Aboukir, and meteorological stations at Aboukir, Heliopolis, Ismailia, and Ramleh in Palestine. At Sarafand in Palestine there is a hospital and supplies depot, and a station at Khartoum. British air forces are permitted to fly wherever they consider it necessary for the purpose of training.

When the new lines of communication are complete the British forces will have a very high degree of mobility and even when stationed in the Canal zone will not be more than two or three hours from Cairo.

As defined in the annexe to the Treaty, the Suez Canal zone includes both sides of the Canal, and since there are no restrictions on British troop movements east of the Canal, British forces will control the Sinai Desert and be in close touch with British troops in Palestine. In 1956 the question as to whether the Egyptian army is able to ensure the free navigation of the Canal will be reviewed. From the limitations placed upon British troops and the new position of Italy in Africa, one point emerges : that Egypt must increase her own defences. In the recent past they consisted of two squadrons of cavalry ; four batteries and one garrison company of artillery ; one motor machine-gun battery, and three infantry brigades, numbering some 13,000, all ranks.<sup>1</sup> At the moment of writing considerable increases are under provision involving the expenditure of £19 million during the next five years. It is estimated that the strength of the army will be raised to at least 60,000 men.<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian Air Force

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations *Armaments Year Book*, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> See an announcement in *The Times*, December 15, 1938.

possesses 27 rather old machines, but the British officers attached to it will remain until it is proficient ; it would be useless now without them. The Egyptian army can avail itself of the services of a British Military Mission stationed in Cairo, and its armament and equipment will be of the same type as that of the British army. Furthermore the restrictions placed upon the numbers of the British troops do not hold good in the event of war, menace of war, or apprehended international emergency, nor do they apply to the Sudan. In addition to the Sudan detachment of the R.A. and two British infantry battalions, the Sudan raises and maintains the Sudan Defence Force amounting to nearly 5,000 men of all ranks ; of these 96 are British officers and N.C.O.'s. The Force is organized into twelve companies of infantry ; three of mounted infantry ; five of Camel Corps ; three of mechanized transport, and two motor machine-gun battalions.<sup>1</sup>

The conquest of Abyssinia has left permanent results on the British defence position. Egypt and the Sudan now lie between an Italian Libya and an Italian Abyssinia. The routes by sea and air between the two Italian territories cross these countries. The possibility of a large native army being raised in Abyssinia, which has an 800-mile frontier with the Sudan as well as a frontier with Kenya, must still be borne in mind, despite Annexe 6 of the Anglo-Italian Agreement<sup>2</sup> ; so also must the possibility of Italy maintaining a large air force in Abyssinia, sufficient to render passage through the narrow waters of the Red Sea dangerous in time of war. But it must be remembered that any forces which Italy may maintain are dependent on sea-borne supplies and reinforcements, and it is questionable whether the Italian navy could ensure the lines of communication to Libya and the Red Sea ports in the event of war with Britain, so long as the British navy has properly defended bases in the Mediterranean.

### *The Suez Canal*

The Suez Canal Company is governed by a Board of Directors, of whom twenty-one are French, ten British,<sup>3</sup> and one Dutch. In 1936 it was agreed to reserve two additional seats for Egyptians. The offices of the Company are in Port Said and Cairo, though Paris is the administrative domicile of the Company ; the jurisdiction of cases of a local character lies with the Egyptian courts. Of a total of 400,000 shares issued, 176,602 or about 44 per cent.

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations *Armaments Year Book*, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Annexe 6 declares that Italy is 'willing to accept the principle that natives of Italian East Africa should not be compelled to undertake military duties other than local policing and territorial defence'.

<sup>3</sup> Of these, three are appointed by His Majesty's Government and seven by a London Committee, representing ship-owning interests.



are in British hands. The Concession is due to end in 1968 ; if at that date the Egyptian government decides not to renew it, compensation payable to the Company will be decided by negotiation. The international status of the Canal is governed by the Convention of October 1888, signed by Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia Spain and Turkey. The essence of the Convention is contained in its first article :

‘ The Suez Maritime Canal shall always be free and open in time of war as in time of peace, to every vessel of commerce or of war without distinction of flag.

‘ Consequently the High Contracting Parties agree not in any way to interfere with the free use of the Canal, in time of war as in time of peace.

‘ The Canal shall never be subjected to the exercise of the right of blockade.’

At the time of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, the hypothetical case was raised as to whether the Canal could be closed to Italian ships, as the vessels of a nation declared the aggressor, under Article 16 of the Covenant. Article 4 of the Convention states that ‘ the High Contracting Parties agree that no . . . act having for its object to obstruct the free navigation of the Canal, shall be committed in the Canal and its ports of access, as well as within a radius of three marine miles from those ports ’.

Thus ‘ in point of fact the real sanction involved is not so much the closing of the Canal itself, as the effective prevention in the Mediterranean or the Red Sea of access to it of the vessels of the state declared to be the aggressor. This being the case, the legal right of closure clearly need never arise ’.<sup>1</sup> The military occupation of the ports of access becomes unnecessary, if naval forces can be effectively disposed outside the three-mile radius, and across the approaches to the Canal : ‘ it becomes therefore a question of preventing approach, rather than prohibiting transit ’.<sup>2</sup>

In Article 10 of the Convention, the Sultan of Turkey received special powers relating to the defence of Egypt and the Canal : these special rights were transferred to Great Britain by the Peace Treaty in 1919,<sup>3</sup> and Great Britain is consequently entitled to ‘ close ’ the Canal if Egypt is involved in war, or for the defence of Egyptian territory and the Canal itself.

In 1937 the Company made two agreements with the Egyptian government : one was to co-operate in the building of an internal

<sup>1</sup> *The Bulletin of International News* (R.I.I.A.), Vol. XII, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Article 152.

harbour between Ismailia and the Great Bitter Lakes ; and the other increased Egypt's share of the profits from £200,000 to £300,000 per annum, increased the quota of Egyptian staff from 25 per cent. to 33 per cent., and agreed to contribute up to £300,000 for the building of the Port Said-Suez road.

The total length of the Suez Canal is 101 land miles ; it is now 198 feet wide and the maximum draught allowed is 34 feet. All ships of the world's navies can therefore pass through the Canal, transit of which takes on the average little over thirteen hours. The following table shows the distances between Great Britain and some of the principal ports east of Suez, and the saving that is effected when the Canal is used instead of the Cape route.

From Plymouth	Via Suez	Via the Cape	Difference
To Bombay . . .	6,200 miles	10,500 miles	4,300 miles
„ Sydney . . .	11,200 „	12,300 „	1,100 „
„ Singapore . . .	8,100 „	11,400 „	3,300 „
„ Hong Kong . . .	9,500 „	12,800 „	3,300 „

The saving in distance from ports in the Persian Gulf is slightly greater than from Indian ports ; it is interesting to note also that Sydney is only 28 miles farther from London via the Panama Canal than via Suez. The reduction of time makes possible a reduction in the number of ships needed to carry the same amount of cargo, and this is of considerable importance in view of the fact that the British Isles' share of the world's shipping has decreased from 41·6 per cent. in 1914 to 26·7 per cent. in 1937, which is equal to a reduction of 1,709,000 tons.<sup>1</sup> Great Britain is no longer by far the most important shipping nation in the world. Other nations have since the War developed their merchant services, often with the aid of subsidies, and have therefore acquired a greater interest in such channels of communication as the Suez Canal. Since Italy's acquisition of Abyssinia three-fourths of Italian colonial interests lie beyond the Suez Canal, and it is natural that Italy should make the free navigation and international control of the Canal a cardinal point in her policy.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Conflict of Interests in the Mediterranean*

Since 1919 Great Britain's principal aim in this area has been to maintain the *status quo*. British supremacy in the shape of naval

<sup>1</sup> Steam and motor tonnage only.

<sup>2</sup> In Annexe 8 of the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1938, Great Britain and Italy reaffirmed their intention to abide by the Convention of 1888 which guarantees the free use of the Canal at all times and for all Powers. One of the main objects of Italy's press campaign against France has been to secure changes in her favour in the administration of the Canal.

power in the Mediterranean, as in nearer waters, has enabled England to pursue her traditional policy of preserving the 'balance of power' in Europe, and in the prosecution of this policy she has acquired certain territories and spheres of influence of great strategic importance: the annexation of Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus, the occupation of Egypt, and more recently the acceptance of the mandate for Palestine, all form part of an acquisition of influence which, with the Red Sea possessions, has enabled Great Britain to mount guard over the route to India.

Great Britain's defence of her naval supremacy in the Mediterranean has been confronted in recent years by the resurgence of Italy under Signor Mussolini, and the increase of Italian power in the eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea basins. So long as Great Britain continues to command the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, Italy's maritime links with the outside world, Fascist Italy will doubtless feel itself a prisoner in its 'own sea', nor will its troubles be materially relieved by the conquest of an East African empire, which in existing circumstances is a hostage to fortune.

There are then in the Mediterranean three European 'great Powers'—Great Britain, France, and Italy—and a number of minor states, such as Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey and Spain, whose friendship is eagerly sought by the greater Powers.

#### (a) The British Position.

The opening of the Suez Canal emphasized that it was in the countries 'east of Suez' that Great Britain's primary interests lay. The Mediterranean has been described at various times as a 'jugular vein', a 'vital route', a 'short cut', and finally, and perhaps most authoritatively, as a 'main arterial road'<sup>1</sup> for the British Empire.

Economically, it is certainly a useful short cut for freight between Great Britain and India, Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, and British East Africa; as a route to Australian ports it has less advantages in saving of distance. Politically it is obviously important in relation to the above countries, for the defence of which Great Britain is responsible. It is part of the direct route for warships and aircraft bound for India and Singapore, and it is also the route along which passes a high percentage of the petroleum supplies for her Navy, Air Force, and mechanized Army. Finally, it is an area in which Great Britain has certain possessions and military obligations. It is only by maintaining her diplomatic influence throughout the Mediterranean and by keeping armed forces at

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, November 5, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 317, col. 283).

strategic points that she is enabled to ensure the safe flow of traffic, which is her first interest in this area.

These strategic points, consisting of Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Palestine, Egypt and the Suez Canal, are dealt with elsewhere in detail. Apart from the essential duties of the metropolitan Power towards its colonial possessions, Great Britain has a military alliance with Egypt, a military alliance with 'Iraq, and a mandate and all it entails for Palestine. In order to fulfil these duties and to honour her treaty obligations, Great Britain must preserve uninterrupted her communications throughout the Mediterranean, and to do this it is essential that she should have both warships and bases. Neither can be of the slightest avail without the other : a base can only protect shipping that lies within the range of its guns, and a fleet cannot exist without convenient depots, where it may be repaired and docked if necessary, and whence it may draw supplies of fuel and equipment. The distance from Gibraltar to Port Said is very nearly 2,000 miles : approximately half-way lies Malta, the base of the British Mediterranean Fleet. Other ports that could be made use of in time of war include Alexandria, Haifa, and Famagusta, none of which is at present equipped or defended as a naval or air station. All these bases and potential bases have been brought within the range of bombing aeroplanes, operating from air-stations belonging to foreign Powers. How grave a menace to ships lying in harbour and to fixed defences they constitute, how effective are British anti-aircraft defences and squadrons of fighting planes, and to what extent a hostile air-fleet could paralyse British commercial shipping passing through the bottle-necks of the Mediterranean, are questions to which only the test of actual war can supply an answer. The Great War demonstrated the danger to be expected from a handful of submarines, which did an amount of damage out of all proportion to their size as an attacking force : there were seldom more than six operating at any one time, yet they sank five million tons of British shipping, and worked from such bases as Constantinople and Fiume. To-day Italy alone possesses some ninety submarines and her principal bases are clustered round the central channels of the Mediterranean. Emerging from the focal area off Port Said a ship would have a short run of open sea before entering the channel 200 miles wide between Libya and Crete, flanked by the Italian base at Tobruk : the alternative route round the north coast of Crete passes within 100 miles of Leros, another Italian base. Beyond this danger zone, the routes inevitably converge on Malta, sixty miles from the coast of Sicily and rather less than 200 from Tripoli. A ship would then have to brave the channel, only ninety miles wide between Sicily and Tunisia, in the centre of

which lies Pantellaria : thereafter it must enter the zone of action of yet more Italian bases in Sardinia, notably Cagliari, which is only 100 miles distant from the French base at Bizerta. This it is hoped would to some extent neutralize Cagliari, though the danger would be heightened were a hostile Power to establish itself in the Balearic Isles. Finally, British tenure of Gibraltar and free use of the Straits depend on the absence of fortifications and air bases in the neighbouring parts of Spain and Spanish Morocco. A powerful Spanish air force, built or supplied by foreign aid, might succeed in making Gibraltar as untenable in an emergency as Malta was considered to be in 1935.

On the subject of British strategy in the Inland Sea there are two clearly defined schools of thought which may for convenience be termed the 'Cape School' and the 'Mediterranean School'. Their arguments may be summarized as follows. The 'Cape School' holds that the increased range, speed, and carrying power of modern aircraft, as well as the influence of the submarine in narrow waters, combine to make the Mediterranean impossible as a trade route in war time for a nation like the British, who, whilst they have comparatively secure land and air bases at its eastern end, depend for naval action on two somewhat vulnerable bases in the centre and at the western entrance of the sea. This school regards the prospect of a major naval engagement in the Mediterranean with such apprehension as to advocate the abandonment of Malta and the withdrawal of the larger part of the Mediterranean Fleet for employment elsewhere. If their view prevails, then the adoption of a properly organized and defended route to the East round the Cape of Good Hope becomes an essential feature of British strategy. These views presuppose a hostile Italy, and the dangers to be apprehended from the action of an enemy without a Mediterranean coastline would obviously be enormously reduced.

The 'Mediterranean School' asserts that the announcement of a policy to abandon Malta and to withdraw the major part of the Mediterranean Fleet would greatly increase the chance of a war in the Mediterranean. They further argue that 'it would be impossible to maintain our air bases or land strongholds in the Mediterranean, or to defend the countries we are bound to defend without a naval force capable of standing up to the enemy's fleet'.<sup>1</sup>

Should circumstances arise in which Great Britain were faced by a hostile Italy, which is the worst case, there are two factors which profoundly influence the issue. The first is the attitude which France would adopt in such a war, and the second is the

<sup>1</sup> *The Round Table*, September, 1936.



availability of Gibraltar as a naval base. So far as France is concerned, if she were allied to Great Britain, the position of Italy would be so weakened that it is more than doubtful whether she could effectively prevent the passage of British vessels through the Mediterranean. The French bases on both the northern and southern shores of the sea would be open to the British fleet, which would then be independent of Malta and could conduct a campaign in conjunction with the French navy against the Italian naval forces with considerable hope of success. The French aerodromes would be available for British air forces, and the situation of Genoa, Spezzia, and other Italian ports would be most unenviable in the face of the combined aerial attack to which they would be subjected.

The strategic value of Gibraltar cannot be properly assessed until the results upon Spanish foreign policy of the victory of General Franco's forces have had time to show themselves more clearly. With a friendly or even a strictly neutral Spain the possession of Gibraltar ensures at least an entry for British shipping in the Mediterranean. Should, however, the Spanish Civil War have concluded in conditions which give Italy or Germany any sort of right, present or future, to operate land or air forces on the Spanish mainland, the harbour of Gibraltar would probably be untenable for British ships in war time. The fortress itself might indeed withstand a siege, but in such conditions it would become a liability rather than an asset to Great Britain.

The question of the abandonment of the Mediterranean as Great Britain's main route to the East cannot be settled merely on the basis of its use as a waterway. To hand it over unconditionally to foreign control would have the most demoralizing effect on Great Britain's position in the Near East and even in India. Such a step, unthinkable as it is in peace, would be wellnigh catastrophic in war. It would inevitably invite the invasion of Egypt (which Great Britain is bound under treaty to protect) and the occupation of Palestine, whilst it would undermine her prestige in the eyes of the whole Moslem world. Initially, it might certainly be necessary to divert all merchant shipping to the Cape route, if only to set free a larger proportion of forces for purely naval action in the Mediterranean. But strategy should be based on the principle that that sea should be reopened as soon as possible as a safe line of communication. This would involve the reinforcement of the land and air garrisons of Egypt and Palestine from India and possibly elsewhere up to a scale suitable for dealing with land attack, and the retention in the eastern Mediterranean of naval forces capable of interfering seriously with, if not indeed of preventing, the passage of transports between Italy and Libya.

With Italy's dependence upon imports for most of her necessities, the blockade which such a policy would impose upon her would become increasingly effective as time went on. But such a blockade could only be maintained by naval forces operating actually in the Mediterranean, and for this the provision of an adequately defended and equipped naval base at Cyprus seems to be an essential feature in British strategy.<sup>1</sup> From a purely economic point of view Great Britain is in a much stronger position than Italy, who is incontestably the weakest of the great Powers in natural resources and who is dependent upon the Mediterranean sea routes for over 80 per cent. of her total imports.

The degree to which Great Britain is dependent upon the Suez Canal-Mediterranean route for her supplies of foodstuffs and raw materials is almost impossible to determine with accuracy. The percentage of British imports that actually pass through the Canal would seem to vary between 9 per cent. and 14 per cent. according to the period of days and weeks over which it is reckoned. The most important item of the south-north traffic bound for British ports is the supply of petroleum from Iran, which constituted in 1937 18 per cent. of Great Britain's total imports of this commodity.<sup>2</sup> Other valuable raw materials originating east of Suez are tin and rubber from Malaya and Netherlands India, and from British India jute, manganese ore, rice, tea, cotton and oil seeds. It is almost impossible to ascertain the proportion of Australian products that pass through the Suez Canal, and the same applies to much of the merchandise shipped from ports on the east coast of Africa, part of which goes by the Cape, part by the Suez Canal. As an alternative to the Suez Canal route there is always the longer voyage round the Cape or from Pacific ports through the Panama Canal; but from within the Mediterranean itself there is no alternative seaway, and in time of war Great Britain might be denied her imports from countries in that area. In volume they are almost equal to the traffic from east of Suez, but in quality they are of a less vital nature. They represent about 11 per cent. of the foodstuffs and raw materials which the United Kingdom imports every week. Cotton from Egypt, phosphates and iron ore from French North Africa and petroleum from Russia, Rumania, and the Haifa pipe-line are the most important of the Mediterranean products. It should be noted in this

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 114-5 above.

<sup>2</sup> The principal sources of Great Britain's supply of oil in 1937 were: Netherlands West Indies and Venezuela 35 per cent.; Iran 18 per cent.; U.S.A. 12 per cent.; Trinidad and other British territories 5 per cent.; Mexico 5 per cent.; Rumania 4 per cent.; Iraq 4 per cent.; Peru 3 per cent.; U.S.S.R. 3 per cent.

connexion that although the Haifa pipe-line runs through territory under British control the producing company is not British but international, and that Great Britain has never relied upon the 'Iraq fields for more than 4 per cent. of her supply : it would seem from this that the importance of the pipe-line is often in danger of exaggeration. Should freedom of passage through the Straits of Gibraltar be denied to merchant vessels, shipment of the mineral products of North Africa could be effected from the Atlantic ports of Morocco ; the possible shortage of Egyptian cotton would affect only about a quarter of the British cotton mills, and even they might be adjusted to a shorter staple ; or supplies might come via Red Sea ports.

Apart from these products, and a certain amount of barley from 'Iraq, Great Britain's Mediterranean imports are mostly non-essential articles such as fruits, hemp and esparto. Of the raw materials therefore that actually pass Gibraltar in normal conditions, there is none either in quality or quantity that can be justly described as ' vital ' to Great Britain's economic requirements. A switch over to alternative routes would undeniably create dislocation for some four to six weeks, but would not of itself mean starvation either for the people or for the industries of the United Kingdom.

#### (b) The Italian Position

Italy's geographic position in the Mediterranean is at once the basis of her strength and her principal weakness. By projecting far down towards the African coast, she all but cuts the Mediterranean in half, and at the same time leaves a long and exposed coast line, near or upon which are situate many of her most important towns. In the latter part of the nineteenth century a united Italy was not unaffected by the imperialist sentiments of the time, and since the Great War this aspect of Italian nationalism has been a feature of the rise and progress of Fascism. Italian possession of the Dodecanese Islands, which had been occupied in the war with Turkey in 1912, was finally recognized in 1923. Italian merchant shipping and civil air lines had been doing pioneer work throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East countries, and there had been considerable activity among the Arab populations of the area in question : this propagandist activity was intensified during and after the period of tension between Italy and the League Powers in 1935.

As a background to this policy of expansion abroad, Italy carried through a programme of military self-sufficiency at home and between 1926 and 1936 had wellnigh trebled the material strength of her navy. In naval building Italy would seem to have

an advantage in that she has confined her construction to swift, light vessels especially adapted for service in the Mediterranean. The steady rise in the range of aircraft has given added significance to her geographic position and her strategic outposts, and by gaining virtual control of Albania,<sup>1</sup> and more especially of the port of Valona, Italy is enabled to 'close' the entrance to the Adriatic, and so relieve herself of the duty of protecting her eastern shores. This arrangement depends upon the maintenance of a pact with Yugoslavia, designed to guard against possible hostility by the latter, or the granting of harbour facilities to an enemy, if Italy were at war. The resurgence of Germany under National-Socialism led to an improvement in Franco-Italian relations and a settlement of outstanding colonial issues was concluded between the two countries in January, 1935.<sup>2</sup> Included in this agreement was the transfer from French to Italian sovereignty of the small island of Dumeirah, which lies off the coast between Eritrea and French Somaliland. In Egyptian military circles it was held that the acquisition and subsequent fortification of Dumeirah was of the utmost importance as an attempt to gain control over the southern entrance of the Red Sea. The strategic value of this rocky islet has yet to be proved, and as there is already the growing harbour at Assab and the established British position on Perim Island and at Aden, it is difficult to visualize any far-reaching changes as a result of any development of this territory.

From the French point of view the agreement was conditional upon an Italian assurance of resistance to German domination of Austria, while Italy on her part sought to prevent the possibility of concerted Franco-British action under the ægis of the League to maintain the independence of Abyssinia. It was at this moment that the decision was taken to embark upon a campaign in East Africa, a venture which was successful, in that Italy secured control over Abyssinia and did so in a comparatively short time. Whatever were the intentions of the Italian government

<sup>1</sup> This and the following sentence were written before the Italian invasion of Albania on Good Friday, April 7, 1939. The ultimate effect of this action upon the general situation was still obscure at the time of going to press.

<sup>2</sup> Although Italy immediately took possession of the territory given to her, the Agreement was never ratified, and it was formally denounced by Italy in December, 1938 (see *The Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XV, No. 26) as a part of the Italian campaign against France begun in November. It was generally considered that the claims in Tunis, Corsica, and Nice, put forward in a demonstration in the Italian Chamber of Deputies and supported by the Italian press, were designed to put Italy in a position to obtain changes in her favour in the administration of the Suez Canal and in Jibuti. It may have been hoped that Mr. Chamberlain, during his visit to Rome in January, 1939, would act as mediator between France and Italy, but the British government declared that it had never considered this, and the French government was even more positive in refusing in advance any such mediation.

towards Great Britain, the sequence of events outlined in the preceding pages constituted in itself a threat to British interests. Both British and Italian imperial communications run east and west through the Mediterranean, and in the strategy which Italy has evolved to ensure her position in the Inland Sea, her chief asset is her ability to concentrate her main forces in a relatively small and compact area. The British shipping routes are crossed first by a transversal consisting of a long chain of naval and air bases, starting at Spezzia, in the north and continued, through Cagliari (in Sardinia), Taranto, Augusta (in Sicily), and Pantellaria, to Tripoli; and, secondly, they are flanked on one side by the powerful base of Portolago in the island of Leros and on the other by the port of Tobruk in Libya. The latter is a small town some sixty miles from the Egyptian frontier and is linked to the southern end of the first strategic line by the 1-130-mile military road built by Marshal Balbo along the Libyan coast. 'Tobruk has the best natural harbour on the North coast of Africa',<sup>1</sup> but it has one grave disadvantage—a complete absence of drinking water: 'every pint of drinking water has to be brought there by tanker'.<sup>2</sup> The value as a bargaining counter of the garrisons in Libya was indicated in the Exchange of Notes embodied in the Anglo-Italian Agreement. The Italian Foreign Minister informed the British Ambassador that orders had been given for a diminution of the forces in Libya.<sup>3</sup> At the time of the Agreement, these were officially estimated to be 45,000 to 50,000, in addition to native troops amounting to between 13,000 and 15,000. There are, however, two considerations that modify the effect of these figures: the first is that the colony depends for its supplies upon the supremacy of the Italian navy in the Eastern Mediterranean, and, secondly, it is estimated that probably half the above strength would be needed to watch the Tunisian frontier and maintain internal order, if Italy were at war or were to threaten Egypt.

There can be no doubt that the Mediterranean is a 'vital' route for Italy. In war materials she is self-sufficient only in aluminium, sulphur, mercury and nitrates; she has to import much of her foodstuffs from abroad, especially meat and fish; and her supplies of coal, iron, copper and potash are negligible. She has no oil, cotton, rubber or phosphates. It has been estimated that 86 per cent. of her imports come by sea, a sea whose outlets

<sup>1</sup> *Admiralty Handbook of Libya*, 1920, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, April 14, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> In answer to a question December 12, 1938, Mr. Butler said there was reason to believe that the Anglo-Italian Agreement had been followed by a marked reduction in the number of effectives in Libya (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 342, col. 1583). Italian sources admit a subsequent increase.



to the oceans are both controlled by Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> While it is true that production of wheat in Libya has gone up since the Italians took possession, Italy's colonial Empire cannot be regarded as producing an appreciable percentage of her imports of raw materials. The latest reports from Abyssinia all go towards showing that the extensive settlement of Italians is, if not impossible, at present unlikely. Spectacular colonization such as the simultaneous settlement of nearly 1,900 peasant families in Libya in October, 1938, is possible only in conditions of complete security and as a result of several years of calculation and experiment.<sup>2</sup> In addition it would appear that the potential mineral wealth of Italian East Africa has been over-estimated and that the cultivation of cereals would have to be undertaken at a height where the rarefied air would be most uncongenial to Italian labourers. In 1931 the white populations of the Italian colonies were as follows: Eritrea, 4,560; Italian Somaliland, 1,668; Libya, 49,407. There are, however, large Italian minorities in other Mediterranean countries. There are 150,000 in Algeria and Morocco; over 100,000 in Tunisia; and 65,000 in Egypt. There the Italians are undoubtedly disliked, despite the fact that some hundreds of thousands of pounds are annually spent on propaganda in the shape of subsidizing newspapers and of educational activities among their large colony. Signor Mussolini's claims to be the Protector of Islam have been dismissed by the Moslem hierarchy, while the Copts have been antagonized by the Italian refusal to recognize the right of the Coptic Patriarch to appoint the Abuna of the Abyssinian Church. Allied as they are to Greek Orthodoxy, the Copts have never felt much love for the Church of Rome, and this last incident has strengthened their dislike.

It seemed that for the time Italy's attention had turned towards the Western Mediterranean and her diplomacy waited upon the outcome of the war in Spain. It has been officially acknowledged that Italy has given considerable help to General Franco, both in the form of men and armaments, and her position in the Mediterranean may render her intervention more dangerous to Great Britain than that of other Powers, such as Germany or the U.S.S.R. The policy of intervention was probably intended to further Italian ambitions in general, though those ambitions may not include the acquisition of Spanish territory. It is unlikely that Italy has contributed men and money to General Franco's cause purely from motives of 'ideological' sympathy: and it is

<sup>1</sup> H. E. Gioacchino Volpe gives 60-70 per cent. of Italian imports as passing Gibraltar (Address delivered in Paris, May 27, 1937).

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times*, October 21, 1938.

not altogether unreasonable to suppose that, now that General Franco has established control over the whole of Spain, Signor Mussolini will expect some return for the assistance he has given. Troops may be withdrawn from the mainland, but personnel to man air and naval bases may be retained in the Balearics : or Italy and Spain may enter into a military alliance on terms of mutual assistance. If Signor Mussolini's ambitions lie in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea, such hypotheses as are outlined above take on a new significance ; French mobilization in North Africa could be interrupted from the Balearics, and the value of Gibraltar as a naval base would disappear if hostile guns were covering the Admiralty harbour. By these means Signor Mussolini could seriously impede any concerted Franco-British action that might be undertaken against him in the eastern Mediterranean.

### (c) The French Position

The third great Power in the Mediterranean is France. She has possessions and commitments round its shores, and beyond its bounds she has colonial territories in all corners of the globe. Like Great Britain she is therefore deeply concerned in any change of the *status quo* affecting her imperial communications. In view of the close ties that bind her to France, Great Britain cannot remain indifferent to any serious reversal which French policy might suffer in the Mediterranean or which might endanger her strategical arrangements.<sup>1</sup> The most important shipping routes for France are those connecting her southern ports, such as Toulon and Marseilles, with her North African bases at Oran, Algiers, and Bizerta. French man-power being outnumbered by German, her armed forces must be supplemented by African troops in time of war.<sup>2</sup> These north-south routes may be rendered precarious by an enemy operating from the west coast of Italy, Sardinia, the Balearic Isles, or from eastern Spain, and to safeguard these communications France has established a number of well-equipped and defended bases. On her south coast she has Toulon and Istres ; Corsica has lately been strengthened and Porto Vecchio in the south of the island serves as an

<sup>1</sup> In this connexion we may notice the British reminder to Italy, after the advancement of extravagant Italian claims upon France, that the Anglo-Italian Agreement had formulated the desire of both parties not to modify or to see modified the *status quo* in the Mediterranean (see *The Times*, December 5, 1938) ; see also Mr. Chamberlain's statements in the House of Commons and at the dinner of the International Press Association, on December 13 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 342, cols. 1584-5 ; and *The Times*, December 14, 1938).

<sup>2</sup> France maintains 134,000 of her basic effectives in North Africa (League of Nations *Armaments Year Book*, 1937).

admirable base for submarines and light craft : in Tunisia, there is a naval base at Bizerta and an air base at Karouba, and in the western end of the Mediterranean the French position is considerably improved by the new air and naval station at Mers-el-Kebir, near Oran. If the safe navigation of these routes is interrupted, France is fortunate in having an alternative seaway across the Atlantic. A system of roads and railways runs from Tunis through Algiers and Oran to Casablanca and Rabat on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, whence troops and supplies may be embarked for Brest and other French Atlantic ports. This route involves an additional 600 miles of sea travel, but allows scope for evasive routing and affords a much greater degree of safety.

As a parallel to the British alliances with Egypt and 'Iraq, France has concluded treaties with Syria and the Lebanese Republic, whereby these former mandated territories are to be elevated to the status of allied and independent countries. The treaties are similar in type to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, but are still unratified. By them, French troops are allowed to remain in Syria till 1944, and on Lebanese territory as in the past. France's defence position is weak in the Eastern Mediterranean, but she has in Tripoli in the Lebanon a potential naval base ; it is also the terminus of the French pipe-line from 'Iraq and an economic outlet serving a large inland area. France imports between 70 per cent. and 80 per cent. of the oil produced in 'Iraq, which satisfies about half her needs in this respect.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to commitments in the Levant, French interests in the Eastern Mediterranean are similar to those of Great Britain. Freedom of communication must be preserved with Indo-China and Madagascar, and good relations must be maintained with Turkey, whose control over the passage of ships of war through the Straits makes her an essential link in any Balkan *bloc* against German advances in South-Eastern Europe.

#### (d) Recent Diplomatic Arrangements

The future of Spain and of her relations with Great Britain are still undecided, as is also the strategic importance she may assume. The course of the Civil War is traced elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> but of especial interest from the Mediterranean aspect was the outbreak of piracy and the rapidly negotiated agreement signed at Nyon in September, 1937. During the first eight months of 1937 there had been thirty-two deliberate attacks upon neutral vessels in the Mediterranean : they were carried out in some cases by aeroplanes under the control of one or other of the belligerent parties in Spain, and by surface vessels and submarines which were never identified.

<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Policy Reports*, June 1, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 58 *et seq.* above.

The attacks occurred in widely separated areas : fifteen British ships, including four warships, were attacked, in positions off the north coast of Spain, in the Straits of Gibraltar, in the western Mediterranean, and in the Malta Channel ; vessels belonging to the Spanish government and the U.S.S.R. were attacked in the Ægean Sea and off Gallipoli.

It was soon realized that this outbreak was something more serious than another ramification of the Spanish Civil War. A Conference was convened at Nyon to which all Mediterranean and Black Sea Powers were invited and, in addition, Germany. Owing to the presence of a representative of the U.S.S.R. and the absence of one from General Franco, Italy and Germany refused to take part in the Conference. The Conference speedily reached an agreement, the main provisions of which may be summarized as follows. An anti-piracy patrol was established with instructions to counter-attack and, if possible, destroy any submarine attacking neutral shipping in contravention of the rules of international law, as referred to in the International Treaty for the Limitation and Reduction of Naval Armaments,<sup>1</sup> and as confirmed in the London Protocol of November, 1936. The British and French fleets were to operate in the western Mediterranean, the Malta Channel, and the territorial waters of signatory Powers. In the eastern Mediterranean, with the exception of the Adriatic, the British and French fleets were to operate on the high seas and were to be allowed by the participating Powers to take action in their territorial waters and to use certain of their ports : each of the participating Powers was to operate in its own territorial waters. Submarine exercises were confined to certain areas, and no submarine was to proceed in the Mediterranean without notification to the participating Powers and without an accompanying surface vessel. All merchant shipping was advised to follow specified routes throughout the Mediterranean.

The Arrangement<sup>2</sup> was signed on September 14, 1937, and three days later was supplemented at Geneva, when measures were agreed upon to counteract attack from the air or by a surface vessel. Aircraft attacking merchant shipping were to be fired upon, and if the attacker were a surface vessel, the patrolling ship was to 'intervene to resist it within the limits of its power'.<sup>3</sup>

Though holding aloof from the Conference itself, Italy joined Great Britain and France in sending naval experts to a meeting in Paris, where the technical arrangements necessary to implement the Nyon Arrangement were discussed ; in accordance with these provisions, Italian warships were to patrol the Tyrrhenian Sea

<sup>1</sup> Signed in London, April 22, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 5568, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 5569, 1937.

and the Adriatic. Despite the refusals of Germany and Italy to attend the Conference, the resultant Arrangement was speedily efficacious.

In the previous January (1937) a Joint Declaration had been signed by the British and Italian governments regarding the Mediterranean<sup>1</sup>; in this 'Gentlemen's Agreement', the two countries had amicably acknowledged their complementary interests in this region, and had undertaken to respect the rights of all Mediterranean Powers. They had also disclaimed 'any desire to modify or . . . to see modified the *status quo* as regards national sovereignty of territories in the Mediterranean area'. In view of this declaration and of many of Signor Mussolini's speeches,<sup>2</sup> his reluctance to send representatives to Nyon was somewhat inexplicable, and put Italy in a much weaker position diplomatically than she would have been had she assisted in the proceedings of the Conference.

The Anglo-Italian Agreement of April, 1938, reaffirmed the Joint Declaration of the previous year<sup>3</sup> and announced Italy's intention to adhere to the London Naval Treaty of 1936. The Agreement touched upon most of the issues in the Mediterranean or the Near East which had for the preceding three years had so unfortunate an effect on Anglo-Italian relations. In this section, specific points have been dealt with in the order in which they arose, and it may be sufficient to say in regard to the Agreement as a whole that its negotiation contributed to lessen the tension between the two countries and so to give greater strength to British diplomacy in Europe.

A minor result of the improvement in Anglo-Italian relations was the adherence by Italy in 1938 to the Montreux Straits Convention of 1936. The conclusion of this Convention regulating the conditions of the Straits between the Ægean Sea and the Black Sea is an outstanding example of a peaceful revision of a post-War treaty.

The Straits, consisting of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmora, and the Bosphorus, are 235 miles long, and previous to the Conference were subject to the régime imposed by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). This provided for the demilitarization of the Straits zone, but allowed Istanbul to have a garrison of 12,000 men, a naval base, and an arsenal: commercial freedom was guaranteed with certain restrictions in war-time, and the number and size of the warships which the Powers might send into the Black Sea were limited. These arrangements were under the control of an International Commission, and the signatory Powers

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 5429 (1937).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. speech at Milan, November 1, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Annexe I.



offered concerted action should the security of the zone be menaced. The Treaty left Russia and Turkey dissatisfied.

In April, 1936, when the European situation made it likely that a request for peaceful revision would meet with sympathy, Turkey called a conference of the Powers to consider her demand for a new Convention. The Conference met at Montreux in June. In its final form the new Convention abolished the International Control and re-established Turkish sovereignty over the Straits, with the right to remilitarize them. Freedom of commerce in time of peace or war (even if Turkey is a belligerent) is guaranteed, provided that merchant ships do not commit acts of war : in time of war, when Turkey is not a belligerent, the vessels of belligerent nations are forbidden to use the Straits save under the authority of the League of Nations, or in accordance with a regional pact, to which Turkey is a party, registered at Geneva. If Turkey is a belligerent herself, or considers herself threatened by war, she may regulate the passage of warships through the Straits at her discretion. The non-riverain Powers are limited to an aggregate of 45,000 tons of light warships in the Black Sea. The Convention is to last 20 years and is liable to revision every five years.

*Note.*—War-Time Agreements and Promises on the Future of the Near East.

The agreements between the Allies and their promises to Arabs and Jews, mentioned above, were as follows :

(1) *The McMahon Promises to the Arabs.*—In 1915 the Allies decided to make use of the Arab desire for independence. The British promises to the Arabs were made in the course of a correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, High Commissioner in Cairo, and the Sharif Hussein of Mecca. In a letter of July 14, 1915, Hussein stated the terms on which he was prepared to co-operate with Great Britain against the Turks, as follows :

‘ England to acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersina and Adana up to the 37° of latitude, on which degree fall Birijik, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, Jezirat (Ibu ‘Umar), Amadia up to the border of Persia; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basra ; on the south by the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is ; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina ’.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif Hussein*, Cmd. 5957 of 1939, p. 3.

McMahon's reply on October 24, 1915, ran thus :

' The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo<sup>1</sup> cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded. With the above modification, and without prejudice to our existing treaties with Arab chiefs we accept those limits. As for those regions lying within those frontiers wherein Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally, France, I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter :—

' Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all the territories within the limits demanded by the Sharif of Mecca.'<sup>2</sup>

(2) *The Sykes-Picot Agreement*.—The British negotiations with Hussein led to diplomatic exchanges with France, which resulted in the secret treaty of May 16, 1916, between Great Britain, France, and Russia. France was to obtain the coastal strip of Syria; Great Britain was to obtain the southern part of Mesopotamia with Baghdad, and the ports of Haifa and Akka in Syria; the region between the French and British territories was to be an independent Arab State or States, divided into French and British spheres of influence; Palestine and the Holy Places were to be subjected to a special régime to be determined later.<sup>3</sup> This agreement was

<sup>1</sup> This was subsequently interpreted by the British government, in accordance with the Sykes-Picot agreement, to include Palestine. Cf. the Churchill Memorandum :

' this promise was given subject to a reservation made in the same letter which excluded from its scope, among other territories, the portions of Syria lying to the west of the district of Damascus. This reservation has always been regarded by His Majesty's government as covering the Vilayet of Beirut and the independent Sanjak of Jerusalem. The whole of Palestine west of the Jordan was thus excluded from Sir H. McMahon's pledge '.

(British White Paper, Cmd. 1700 (1922)); and the letter from Sir Henry McMahon to *The Times* of July 23, 1937 :

' I feel it my duty to state, and I do so definitely and emphatically, that it was not intended by me in giving this pledge to King Hussein to include Palestine in the area in which Arab independence was promised.

' I also had every reason to believe at the time that the fact that Palestine was not included in my pledge was well understood by King Hussein.'

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 5957 of 1939, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> See Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, Vol. VI, p. 16.

communicated neither to Italy nor to Hussein. Its publication by the Bolsheviks in November, 1917 led to complications with both these allies of the three Powers.

(3) *The Balfour Declaration*.—The Russian imperial government was hostile to Zionism, so that it was not until after the Russian Revolution that Great Britain was able to seek the support of world Jewry by herself giving support to the aims of the Zionist Organization.<sup>1</sup> Negotiations between Balfour and Dr. Weizmann throughout 1917 led to the Balfour Declaration, in a letter of November 2 to Lord Rothschild :

‘ I have much pleasure in conveying to you on behalf of His Majesty’s Government the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet.

‘ “ His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by the Jews in any other country.”

‘ I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.’<sup>2</sup>

(4) On June 11, 1917, a British statement was made to a committee of Syrian Arabs in Cairo, assuring them ‘ that pre-War Arab States, and Arab areas freed by military action of their inhabitants during the war shall remain entirely independent ’.<sup>3</sup>

(5) On November 7, 1918, a joint Anglo-French declaration promised, in Syria and Mesopotamia, ‘ the establishment of National Governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations ’.<sup>4</sup>

These agreements and obligations have been the foundation of the subsequent political development of the Arab states and mandates, and the chief task of British policy in the Middle East has been to interpret, reconcile, and fulfil them. The complica-

<sup>1</sup> See Palestine Royal Commission *Report*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Palestine Royal Commission *Report*, Cmd. 5479 (1937), Vol. VI, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> T. E. Lawrence, letter in *The Times*, September 11, 1919.

<sup>4</sup> *History of the Peace Conference*, Vol. VI, p. 141.

tions to which they have led have been of peculiar importance because they affect four world-groups : the Islamic world, and particularly the new Arab States ; the Jewish race in every country ; the British Empire, with a Moslem population of a hundred millions ; and the French Empire.

## Middle Eastern Interests : I

*Palestine*

## (a) British Interests

PALESTINE is the bridge connecting Africa and Asia, part of the only practicable corridor between the Nile and the Euphrates. It is in a similar relation to the Suez Canal on the one side as is Egypt on the other, for it affords the possibility of defence against land attack upon the Canal from the north. Much of Palestine's strategic importance depends upon Haifa, the third largest harbour in the Eastern Mediterranean, which offers a possible alternative to Cyprus or Alexandria as an eastern Mediterranean naval base, though its fortification is prohibited under the terms of the present mandate. Haifa is also a great oil-port, the terminus of the pipe-line from 'Iraq. Since ocean shipping calling at Palestinian ports trebled between 1931 and 1935, there is already a demand for an expansion of the harbour at Haifa and the construction of a full-size port at Jaffa or Tel-Aviv.

Moreover, Palestine has great and increasing importance as a centre of communications and an *entrepôt*.

'The great economic event in this part of the world since the war has been the conquest of the Syrian desert by our modern technique. The semi-circle of Arab countries—Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, 'Iraq—which used to be a "fertile crescent" with an almost impassable desert between its horns, has been transformed into a bow with quite a number of strings to it: an air route, a motor route, a pipe-line, and possibly a railway to follow. In consequence, Palestine—situated, as it is, at the western tip of the bow—has become the Mediterranean vestibule of a hinterland that stretches away eastwards to Baghdad, and even to Teheran.'<sup>1</sup>

Communications by rail and road are as yet imperfect. Palestine is traversed by railways linking Egypt with Syria, but there is no through connexion, and most goods are sent by road to avoid the delays of change of gauge. A through motor-road from Haifa to

<sup>1</sup> *Round Table*, September 1937, p. 751.



Baghdad and Iran is projected, but at present all traffic runs north into Syria and strikes across the desert from Damascus. The pipe-line from the 'Iraq Petroleum Company's oil-field at Kirkuk crosses Palestine to Haifa; another pipe-line to Haifa from the British Oil Development Company's concession at Mosul is probable; and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company has obtained authority to build a pipe-line across Palestine from its Khuzistan oil-field in Southern Iran, to eliminate the time and expense of the circumnavigation of Arabia from Abadan on the Shatt-el-Arab. Furthermore, Palestine is a focal area of British air communications between Europe and South Africa and the East. Imperial Airways uses Tiberias as a stopping-place in its Far Eastern services, and a new international airport has been constructed at Lydda. Thus the ports and landing-grounds of Palestine are becoming one of the great outlets for Near and Middle Eastern traffic, so much so that it has been suggested that Palestine is perhaps capable of attaining the key-position of an *entrepôt* between Europe and Asia.<sup>1</sup> There are competing *entrepôts*, however, which an Arab hinterland may use in preference to Palestine so long as Arab hostility to the Jews persists. Rather than send their goods from a Jewish port, Moslem exporters in 'Iraq and Iran may prefer to send them from Beirut via Damascus; or, when Turkey has completed the railways which she is now building into both those countries, they may choose to incur the extra expense of sending their goods to distant Turkish ports rather than support what they regard as Anglo-Jewish rule in Palestine by using the easier Palestinian outlets.

Palestine contains the Holy Places of Judaism and Christianity, and the third holiest shrine of Islam. The religious associations of the Holy Land are of the first importance to Great Britain, since hers is the greatest existing Christian empire, with a tradition of friendship towards world Jewry, and a Moslem population of some 100 millions, larger than that of any other State. The mandate for Palestine is the crowning example of a characteristic of British imperialism, which a German observer has noted, that 'throughout the world, England is the political ally of every great religious force', and thus 'the world's Holy Places are almost all under British protection'.<sup>2</sup> The competition for control of the Holy Places of Palestine, however, has threatened to convert Britain's position there into a liability.

General Smuts has said that 'the policy of the National Home and the meaning of the mandate to Great Britain were decided on as matters of first-class importance, and on considerations of high

<sup>1</sup> See A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs for 1934*, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> Dibelius, *England* (English edition, Cape, 1930), p. 105.

international policy and far-reaching strategy'.<sup>1</sup> The British government accepted the mandate in order to give effect to a policy that they had already decided upon, and virtually drafted its terms themselves in order to incorporate the pledges to Arabs and Jews which they had already given on their own account.<sup>2</sup> At that time the importance of Palestine to Great Britain was primarily strategic, and the political and religious considerations were subsidiary. The failure of the mandate has reversed the importance of these factors, and the strategic strength given through the control of Palestine has been almost outweighed by the political weakness arising from the hostility which Great Britain's mandatory policy has roused throughout the Arab world.

The dominant British political interest in Palestine became, therefore, to secure as soon as possible a settlement which would appease the Arab world, yet which would neither sacrifice the interests of the Jewish immigrants who had already settled in Palestine under British protection, nor destroy the hopes of the persecuted Jews in Europe for a national home in Palestine. Great Britain's problem to-day is fundamentally the same as it was during the War : to recover and maintain the friendship and respect equally of the Arabs in the Middle East and of the Jewish race all over the world, neither of which, in the long run, can she afford to forgo.

#### (b) Arabs and Jews

At the Peace Conference a conciliatory policy was pursued by the Emir Feisul, son of King Hussein, and T. E. Lawrence : they approved the immigration of Jews into Palestine provided there were proper safeguards for Arab interests, and asked for 'the effective super-position of a great trustee'.<sup>3</sup> The Arabs as a whole, however, desired an independent and united Syria, including Palestine.<sup>4</sup> They have always held that the McMahon pledge<sup>5</sup> patently included Palestine in the area of Arab independence, and they therefore deny the validity of the Balfour Declaration, and reject the policy of the Jewish national home expressed in the mandate.

The Palestinian Arabs are a predominantly agricultural community. Their backwardness is due to the open-field system of agriculture, insecurity of tenure owing to lack of inalienable minimum holdings, absence of capital and consequent dependence

<sup>1</sup> At the Sixteenth Zionist Conference at Johannesburg ; *Daily Telegraph*, July 31, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> See the detailed account of these various pledges given above, pp. 138-41.

<sup>3</sup> Feisul's Memorandum : see *Great Britain and Palestine*, 1915-36, (R.I.I.A., Information Department, Paper No. 20, 1937), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> King-Crane Report : *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 139 above.

upon money-lenders, and inadequacy of education. Until very recently the Arabs have been as ill-organized politically as they are ill-equipped socially ; until 1936 nationalism did not override the traditional feuds of the aristocracy, and the Arabs have never had an organization comparable to that of the Jews. The Arab movement was represented formerly by the Arab Executive, elected by the Palestine Arab Congress ; but, by 1935, six regularly constituted parties had crystallized, and their leaders combined the following year to form the Arab Higher Committee. The methods of violence advocated by the Mufti of Jerusalem and his supporters later led to the formation of an Arab opposition known as the Arab Defence (or Nashashibi) Party.

The constant fears of the Arabs are that their land will be expropriated for Jewish colonization, and that immigration will, in time, create a majority of Jews over Arabs in the country. These fears are bound up with the desire for self-government, whereby the Arabs could regulate the amount of Jewish immigration so as to prevent the Jews from swamping the country.

The Arabs' fears are stimulated by the energy, efficiency, and wealth of the Jewish community. The Jews are far more highly organized politically than the Arabs. Most of them have been in agreement with the policy of the Zionist Organization ; the chief exception are the Revisionists, who desire unchecked immigration not only into Palestine, but into Transjordan as well. The importance of this party of Jewish imperialism is less in its numerical strength (it claims to represent 17 per cent. of Palestinian Jews), than in the alarm which its extravagances arouse among the Arabs. In accordance with the terms of the mandate, a Jewish Agency was created in 1929, with a council on which Zionists and non-Zionists are equally represented, to co-operate with the Palestine government in all matters concerning the Jewish community, particularly in preparing immigration schedules. The Jewish Agency largely directs colonization and settlement.

Both materially and intellectually the Jews enjoy great advantages over the Arabs. Many immigrants have a secondary education, and almost every Jewish child is educated in schools provided by Jewish funds. The Jewish cultivator has much greater security than the Arab ; many immigrants have independent means, and they can purchase their land or obtain long leases from their colonization societies. The Jewish colonies farm intensively, whereas most Arabs still cultivate extensively.

Between 1922 and 1936 the Palestinian population increased by over 78 per cent. The Jewish population increased by 343 per cent., though in absolute figures its increase was less than that

of the non-Jewish population. The Jewish proportion of the population has risen from 11 per cent. to 28 per cent., an expansion due above all to immigration. To the Jews, on the one hand, this increase is considerably less than is needed to relieve the situation of persecuted Jewry in Germany and eastern Europe ; and it is less, they assert, than the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine would warrant. To the Arabs, on the other hand, it is the beginnings of an influx, made possible only by the terms of a mandate which they repudiate, which will ultimately swamp their country with alien settlers.

By accepting the mandate in 1920 Britain undertook three responsibilities : the establishment of a Jewish national home in consultation with the Zionist Organization (which had asked at the Peace Conference that Great Britain should be mandatory for Palestine), the protection of Arab rights, and the encouragement of self-government for the joint community.<sup>1</sup> The Churchill Memorandum in 1922 emphasized that the British government did not aim at a wholly Jewish Palestine, nor contemplate the subordination of the Arabic population, culture, or language ; the creation of a Jewish national home meant the further development of the existing Jewish community, which must ' know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance ' ; therefore the Jewish community should be able to increase its numbers by immigration, not exceeding the economic absorptive capacity of the country and not prejudicial to the welfare of the existing population.<sup>2</sup> The Zionist Organization formally accepted the policy of the Memorandum ; the Arabs rejected it.

The mandate came into force in 1923. Britain attempted to discharge the three responsibilities of the mandatory power by pursuing a middle course between the demands of Arabs and Jews in regard to immigration, and by encouraging co-operation between the two communities and the administration, as the basis of a system of self-government. Two attempts were made to set up representative institutions. In 1922 the High Commissioner proposed a legislative council, but the Arabs refused to participate unless there were a majority of Arabs over official and other elected members, and the attempt collapsed. Again in 1935 a constitution was proposed, with a large unofficial minority on the legislative council ; but the Jews unanimously condemned it, there was much opposition both among the Arabs and in England, and the outbreak of the disturbances soon afterwards put an end to the plan. The problem of self-government, however, has been subordinate to the persistent dispute over Jewish

<sup>1</sup> Mandate for Palestine ; British White Paper, Cmd. 1785 (1922).

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 1700 (1922).

immigration. There have been two periods of intensive immigration, the first reaching its peak in 1925, the second in 1935. The first peak year was followed by a severe economic crisis, which was due, according to the Shaw Commission, to immigration 'in excess of the economic absorbing power of the country'.<sup>1</sup> The Commission advised that the British government should define its protection of non-Jewish interests in regard to land tenure and immigration, prevent the recurrence of the excessive immigration of 1925-6, and make a scientific inquiry into the possibilities of land settlement. This exacerbated the Arab-Jew controversy: the Jews demanded that their persons and properties be protected, immigration and colonization be increased, and the economic development of the country be carried farther; the Arabs demanded the cessation of immigration, a pronouncement that Arab lands were inalienable, and democratic government with representation on a basis of population. The British government accordingly appointed the Hope Simpson Commission in 1930 to inquire into immigration, land settlement, and development; and at the same time as its report was published, stating that at present there was no land available for agricultural settlement and proposing restrictions on agricultural immigration,<sup>2</sup> they issued a White Paper endorsing its main findings.<sup>3</sup> There was a storm of protest from the Jews, who attacked the Report's estimate of the area of cultivable land in Palestine as based on entirely inadequate evidence, and what they regarded as its implied criticism of all previous Jewish activities there. As a result of conversations between the government and the Jewish Agency, a letter was published in 1931 from the Prime Minister to Dr. Weizmann, which conciliated the Jews by concentrating on aspects of the problem which were agreeable to them and by extreme courtesy of phraseology.<sup>4</sup> Upon the publication of the MacDonald Letter the rôles of Arabs and Jews were immediately reversed, and the Arabs denounced it as a breach of faith and a repudiation of the White Paper's policy. When the government appointed Mr. French as Director of Development, the Arabs refused to co-operate unless the MacDonald Letter were repudiated, and the Jews protested against the restriction of Jewish land-purchases, so that the French investigations had no practical results.

The second period of intensive immigration, which culminated in 1935, brought far more immigrants than the first: more than half the Jewish immigrants since the War have entered Palestine since 1933. This influx caused no economic depression like the

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, Cmd. 3530 (1930).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Cmd. 3686 (1930).

<sup>3</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 3692 (1930).

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, February 14, 1931.



earlier one, since it was caused chiefly by the great influx of Jews from Nazi Germany, bringing with them large imports of capital and thus causing an unprecedented trade boom. But the conditions of a lasting appeasement between the two communities were as far away as ever. 'Everyone in Palestine agrees that the economic development is astonishing; no one thinks that the political situation shows any appreciable improvement,' wrote Lord Samuel in 1934.<sup>1</sup> The Peel<sup>2</sup> Commission described the Palestinian situation in 1925 at some length in their Report, 'because it is important to make it clear that the situation as we ourselves found it eleven years later is not a different situation, brought about by new or temporary factors, in Palestine or outside it. It is the old situation intensified. Most of what has happened since 1925 has been a repetition, on a steadily increasing scale of gravity, of what happened before 1925. The present difficulties of the problem of Palestine were all inherent in it from the beginning. Time has not altered, it has only strengthened them'.<sup>3</sup> In 1936 the original threefold task of the mandatory Power was superseded by the necessity for reimposing and maintaining order, and it became clear that British policy had failed.

Although the Palestinian Arabs desired self-government after the War, they were prepared to accept British protection and advice. For ten years after the mandate came into force, their hostility was directed against Jewish immigration, rather than against the government which was making Jewish immigration possible. The first immigration ordinance in 1920 evoked the Arab fears, which have persisted, that Jewish colonization would deprive them of their lands and that Jewish immigration would in time render the population overwhelmingly Jewish. The report on the disturbances of 1921, however, stated that apart from these fears there was no racial or religious animosity against the Jews.<sup>4</sup> There has never been religious antagonism between the two; even the conflict over the Wailing Wall was political. There was originally no racial antagonism, since both peoples are Semitic, but such antagonism has since arisen owing in the first place to Jewish exclusiveness, and later to the excitement created by Arab nationalism. From 1923 to 1928 was a period of comparative political calm, but in September, 1928, there was a clash between Jews and Arabs at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, leading to much more serious disturbances all over the country in August,

<sup>1</sup> *Observer*, July 8, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 149-50.

<sup>3</sup> Palestine Royal Commission *Report*, British Blue Book, Cmd. 5479 (1937), p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 1546 (1921).

1929. The Shaw Commission, which investigated these outbreaks, reported that their main cause was the fundamental Arab fear of the consequences of Jewish immigration, and that they were neither premeditated nor directed against the British administration.<sup>1</sup>

Though a period of economic progress followed the controversies of 1930, there was no lessening of political tension. There were minor riots and murders of Jews in 1930 and 1931, and increasing resort to agrarian crime. In 1933 the Arabs declared a general strike as the culmination of a campaign against Jewish immigration, and rioting followed in the towns. These disturbances 'constitute a milestone, for they were for the first time a manifestation of Arab feeling against the government as well as against the Jews. The cause of this seems to have been despair in face of what the Arabs regarded as the entrenched Jewish influence in London, of which they saw evidence in the White Paper controversy and in the MacDonald letter of 1931'.<sup>2</sup> In the autumn of 1935 the trade boom was checked by the Mediterranean tension resulting from the Italo-Ethiopian War. Arab restlessness, which had been shown throughout that year in the crystallization of parties, came to a head in November with a declaration demanding democratic government, prohibition of transfer of land to Jews, cessation of Jewish immigration, and the formation of a competent committee to determine the economic absorptive capacity of the country. In the parliamentary debates on the proposed constitution which took place early in 1936, the Arabs saw 'fresh evidence of Jewish influence in London, and proof that the self-governing institutions for which they were asking were as far away as ever',<sup>3</sup> and in April they renewed their demands and declared a general strike. Disorders became general: there were attacks on British troops and Jewish colonies, peasants inaugurated sabotage, and small organized bands carried on a guerrilla warfare from the hills. Negotiations broke down, because the Arabs would not end the strike until immigration was stopped, and the government would not suspend immigration until order had been restored. In October, however, owing to increasing economic hardship, the reinforcement of British military forces, and the mediation of the rulers of the four Arab States, the strike was called off; and in November a Royal Commission arrived in Palestine to investigate the causes of the unrest.

The Peel Commission concluded that the position in Palestine was a deadlock, and that peace, order, and good government could be maintained only 'by a rigorous system of repression'.<sup>4</sup> There

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, Cmd. 3530 (1930). <sup>2</sup> *Great Britain and Palestine*, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> British Blue Book, Cmd. 5479 (1937), p. 373.

was an irrepressible conflict between the two national communities in Palestinian territory, and the circumstances made the mandatory duty of developing self-governing institutions impossible to fulfil. The Commission therefore proposed partition of the territory as the only solution. They suggested that the mandate should terminate and be replaced by a treaty system analogous to those of 'Iraq and Syria, and that two sovereign independent States should be set up, one Arab and one Jewish, with a small enclave to be reserved under a new British mandate.

The advantages of such partition to the Arabs would be the obtaining of national independence and deliverance from the fear of being submerged under Jewish immigration. The advantages to the Jews would be the establishment of a national home, free from Arab rule, into which they could admit as many Jewish immigrants as they themselves believed could be absorbed.

The Report of the Commission was published in July, 1937, and the government at the same time issued a statement of policy endorsing the proposal for partition as 'the best and most hopeful solution of the deadlock'.<sup>1</sup> The Permanent Mandates Commission of the League, the League Council, and the Zionist Congress declared themselves favourable in principle to the examination of a solution involving partition. The Arabs as a whole, both the Arabs of Palestine and the independent Arab States, were hostile to the proposals, and refused to give evidence before the later Partition Commission. The principal criticism from the Jewish side was that the area allotted to the Jewish State was too small, and that it should be increased by the addition of the Negeb, the large desert area between Beersheba and Aqaba.

In January, 1938, the government published the terms of reference of a technical fact-finding Commission which would visit Palestine to study the details and practicability of the plan of partition,<sup>2</sup> and in April this Commission arrived in Palestine.

With the arrival of the Woodhead Commission in Palestine, an acute phase in the campaign of lawlessness and terrorism began, which increased in violence throughout the summer, and had not been entirely brought under control by the time the Commission's Report<sup>3</sup> was published in November. The Commission considered three plans of partition, the first being that suggested by the Peel Report, with slight modifications. This was rejected as not fulfilling the condition mentioned in the Commission's terms of reference that any boundaries proposed should necessitate the 'inclusion of the fewest possible Arabs and Arab enterprises' in

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5513 (1937).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Cmd. 5634 (1938).

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 5854. The Commission was called after its Chairman, Sir John Woodhead.

the Jewish State and *vice versa*. Of the two alternative plans proposed by the Commission neither was approved by a majority of the members. In addition to their criticisms of these specific plans, the Commission pointed out a number of objections to which any plan of partition would be open. They believed that any Arab State set up would be far from self-supporting and would have to receive financial assistance from Great Britain. Moreover, a Customs union would be essential for the prosperity of Palestine as a whole, and such a union between mandated territories and independent States would create difficulties that could be overcome only by a policy on the part of the mandatory which would be incompatible with the fiscal independence of the Arab and Jewish States. The Commission added that any frontiers that could be drawn for a Jewish State would be inadequate for purposes of defence.

The Report was published on November 9, 1938, together with a statement of policy by the British government.<sup>1</sup> This announced that a study of the Report had led the government to the conclusion that the political, administrative, and financial difficulties involved in partition were so great that this solution was impracticable. They believed that it was possible to find other means of meeting the situation and that the surest foundation for peace and progress would be an understanding between Jews and Arabs. They therefore proposed to invite representatives of both peoples in Palestine, of the neighbouring Arab States, and of the Jewish Agency to confer in London regarding future policy. If agreement were not reached within a reasonable time, the government would then take their own decision, and announce the policy they would propose to follow.

In a statement in Parliament Mr. Malcolm MacDonald said that the British government were in communication with the governments of the neighbouring Arab States.<sup>2</sup> It was not proposed to invite representatives from Syria or the Lebanon, but the French government would be informed of questions of interest to those countries. The British government reserved the right to refuse to receive leaders whom they regarded as responsible for the campaign of assassination and violence, and must exercise this right in the case of the Mufti of Jerusalem. Even if the discussions failed they could not but help the government to decide on a policy which fulfilled Great Britain's duty to both peoples.

### (c) Defence and Internal Security

The mandate laid down that no military, naval, or air forces should be raised or maintained by the administration of Palestine,

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, November 10, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> On November 9, 1938 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 341, col. 473).

except such as be organized on a voluntary basis for the preservation of peace and order. But the mandatory Power was entitled to have full use of the roads, railways, and ports of Palestine for the movement of armed forces and the carriage of fuel and supplies.<sup>1</sup>

The extent of British military commitments in Palestine has varied greatly according to the state of tranquillity in the country. During the first period of appeasement from 1923 to 1928 British forces were reduced to one squadron of the Royal Air Force and two companies of armoured cars; the police force was at the same time reorganized and reduced. The Permanent Mandates Commission expressed doubts about the wisdom of these reductions, and drew the attention of the mandatory to the 'danger of not maintaining adequate local forces'.<sup>2</sup>

After the disturbances of 1928 and 1929, the Shaw Commission advised the strengthening and reorganization of the garrison, and the Permanent Mandates Commission held that the inaction of the mandatory power was the fundamental cause of a disturbance of such dimensions. In 1930 the Palestine Police Force was reorganized; and the normal strength of the garrison from 1929 to 1933 was two infantry battalions, one flight Royal Air Force, and three sections of an armoured car company.<sup>3</sup> On the outbreak of the disorders of 1936, another battalion arrived from Egypt; this was the beginning of a steady stream of reinforcements from Egypt, Malta and England, which increased the garrison from under 10,000 in May, 1936, to nearly 30,000 in October. The continuance of disorder has made it impossible to reduce these forces to normal strength again, but the Army estimates for 1938 allowed for a garrison of 5,000 men.<sup>4</sup> Since then the figures have risen considerably and early in 1938 there were fifteen battalions of infantry in the country; in addition there is an armoured car company at Ramleh (less one section at Maan), and two squadrons of the Royal Air Force, divided between Ramleh and Ismailia.<sup>5</sup> The British police force of about 900 is stationed at Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, and Nablus. There is also the Palestinian police force of about 2,000.

### *Transjordan*

Transjordan covers the fertile plateau between the Jordan and the Syrian and Arabian deserts. It is traversed from north to

<sup>1</sup> Article 17 of the mandate; British White Paper, Cmd. 1785 (1922).

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the Ninth Session*, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Ormsby-Gore in the House of Commons, February 17, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 320, col. 1167).

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, April 2, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> *Air Force List*, November, 1938.



south by the Hejaz Railway, the only means of rapid communication between Syria and the Hejaz ; and from east to west by the oil-pipe line to Haifa, and the air route to the East,<sup>1</sup> as well as by the projected Haifa-Baghdad motor route. Transjordan forms, on the one hand, a buffer between Syria and Palestine in the north and Saudi Arabia in the south ; on the other hand, a link between Palestine in the west and 'Iraq in the east, which made possible the establishment of air routes and motor routes from the Mediterranean to Baghdad and India through an unbroken zone of territories either under mandate or friendly to Great Britain.

For British imperial strategy the most important point in Transjordan is Aqaba, the port lying at the head of the eastern, as Suez lies at the head of the western, of the two gulfs divided by the Sinai peninsula which open into the north end of the Red Sea. The frontiers between Transjordan, the Hejaz, and the Nejd were never defined after the War ; and in 1925, when Ibn Saud conquered the Hejaz, Great Britain included Aqaba and Maan in Transjordan.<sup>2</sup> King Ibn Saud claimed the Maan-Aqaba district on the ground that it was rightfully part of the territory of the Hejaz, but he agreed to recognize Transjordanian administration there until favourable circumstances permitted a settlement of the question.<sup>3</sup> Aqaba is of great strategic importance. It is the only town on the east coast of the Red Sea where a harbour could be constructed. Moreover, the route from Palestine to Aqaba is an overland alternative to the sea route by the Suez Canal ; for Aqaba could be connected by motor road through Maan to Amman, whence there is a road to Jerusalem crossing the Jordan by the Allenby Bridge ; and the connexion with Maan also gives railway communication with Syria, Palestine (via Damascus), and the Mediterranean. The construction of a railway down the Wadi Araba from the Dead Sea has also been contemplated. These routes would be of extreme importance for troop transport in the event of the obstruction of the Suez Canal, or in the case of a conflict between Transjordan and Saudi Arabia.<sup>4</sup> The importance of Aqaba is enhanced by the possibility that there may be oil in the neighbourhood.

Transjordanian Palestine did not, in the British view, fall within the area to which the Balfour Declaration applied. Although it was included in the mandated territory of Palestine, the mandatory

<sup>1</sup> Imperial Airways have the use of the aerodromes at Amman and Ziza.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Amery in the House of Commons, July 6, 1925 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 186, cols. 44-5).

<sup>3</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 2951 (1927), Note 2, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> See *Pester Lloyd*, February 9, 1936, and *Völkischer Beobachter*, November 5, 1937.

was empowered to postpone or withhold at its discretion the application to Transjordan of the terms of the mandate, and to provide such administration as it thought suitable ; <sup>1</sup> Transjordan has therefore been exempted from those clauses dealing with the Jewish national home, and Jews have been prohibited from acquiring land there. In 1921 the British government recognized the Emir Abdulla, brother of King Feisul, as ' administrator ' under the mandate ; in 1923 they recognized an ' independent government ' under British tutelage, as in ' Iraq, and the Emir proclaimed the independence of his country. The principle of indirect administration was laid down in a treaty of 1928, whereby the Emir agreed to be guided, in matters concerning foreign relations, financial policy, jurisdiction over foreigners, and freedom of conscience, by British advice, communicated through the British Resident.<sup>2</sup> By an agreement of 1934 the Emir was enabled to appoint consular representatives in neighbouring Arab States.<sup>3</sup>

Transjordan was concerned in two main proposals of the Peel Commission Report : first, that the projected Cisjordanian Arab State be united to Transjordan, and secondly, that Aqaba be retained under mandatory administration. The Emir himself advised the Arabs of Palestine not to oppose the partition scheme ; he held that, provided there were adjustments on certain points which harshly affected the Arabs, the Report must be accepted.<sup>4</sup> His attitude later hardened, however, in the direction of accepting the majority Arab theme of the indivisibility of Palestine.

As the chief defence problem of Palestine is internal security, so that of Transjordan is generally external security, against sporadic Arab raids or a concerted attack from Saudi Arabia. To-day, however, the main problem is the suppression of sporadic bands of raiders who use Transjordan as a base for operations in Palestine. The treaty of 1938 permitted Britain to maintain, raise, organize, and control armed forces in Transjordan for defence and internal security, and to have every facility for the movement of and communication between such forces.

For police work in Transjordan there is the Arab Legion, 800 strong, under British commandants. The Transjordan Frontier Force, which is for the defence of the mandated territory only, has British officers and is divided into three cavalry squadrons and two mechanized companies. Its headquarters are at

<sup>1</sup> Article 25 of the mandate ; British White Paper, Cmd. 1785 (1922).

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 3069 (1928).

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 4999 (1934).

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, July 12, 1937.

Zirka near the desert frontier, but there are detachments at Maan in the south and Jisr-el-Majami in the north. The Royal Air Force have one section of an armoured car company at Maan, and a bomber squadron at Amman, where tribal raids can be discouraged by the threat of air reprisals.<sup>1</sup>

### *'Iraq*

Britain's traditional interest in Mesopotamia arising out of the latter's geographical position has been supplemented in the last fifty years by a new interest arising out of its natural resources.

Mesopotamia, with Palestine and Transjordan, forms the land bridge between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. Great Britain's naval command of the Indian Ocean would be hampered if the control of the head of the Persian Gulf were not in her hands, or at least in the hands of a friendly and stable Power. Although Great Britain is not permitted under her international agreements to use 'Iraqi territory for a naval base, her special position in 'Iraq has naturally strengthened her position on the Persian Gulf also, as well as contributing to the consolidation of British interests in the Middle East generally. It is valuable, in particular, for the defence of the approaches to Abadan and the Persian oilfields.

Moreover, 'Iraq's position on the middle of the 'Eurasian axis' gives her peculiar importance as a centre of British imperial communications, lying as she does on the shortest possible route from Great Britain to India. She has become a British civil and military air depot for the whole of the Middle East. The Imperial Airways route to the East crosses 'Iraq, and there are stopping places at Rutba, Baghdad, and Basra. Baghdad is the centre from which roads radiate out via Mosul to Nisibin in Anatolia; via Rutba and Damascus to Beirut in Syria; via Rutba and Amman and Jerusalem to Haifa in Palestine; via Basra to the Persian Gulf; and via Khaniqin, Khermanshah and Hamadan to Teheran in Iran. The Constantinople-Baghdad railway has been built as far as Nisibin in Anatolia, 200 miles north of Mosul; there are lines north from Baghdad to Baiji and another to Kirkuk, which is to be extended to Mosul; and a motor service between Kirkuk and Nisibin connects the 'Iraqi railway system with the Taurus and Simplon-Orient Express (Baghdad to London in six days). A second international route from Baghdad to Haifa has been projected.

Great Britain's second great interest in 'Iraq is the undeveloped oil supplies of that country, which are by far the greatest source of oil under the sovereignty either of Britain or of her formal allies,

<sup>1</sup> *Air Force List*, February, 1939.

although 'Iraq ranks only eighth among the world's producers of oil. The oil resources of 'Iraq are being developed by the 'Iraq Petroleum Company and the Khaniqin Company. The 'Iraq Petroleum Company is operating under a concession, given in 1925 for seventy-five years, to exploit the oil resources in the whole of 'Iraq except the 'Transferred Territories'. Its main concern is with the two principal oilfields at Kirkuk and Mosul. The Company's shares are equally divided between the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the Royal Dutch Shell Company, a group of American companies, and a group of French companies; the major interest is British. From Kirkuk the double pipe-line runs to Haditha on the Euphrates, whence the French branch runs through Palmyra to Tripoli (Syria), and the British branch runs through Transjordan to Haifa. The Khaniqin Company, a subsidiary of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, is developing that part of 'Iraq near Khaniqin known as the 'Transferred Territories',<sup>1</sup> which already produces enough oil for the local requirements of 'Iraq; there is a refinery at Alwand which will probably be connected with the pipe-line to the Mediterranean. Another field, west of the Tigris, is being exploited by the British Oil Development Company.

After the War 'Iraq was recognized as an independent Arab State, in accordance with the McMahon promises, but was placed under the mandate of Great Britain until it should be capable of complete self-government. The mandate, however, was repudiated by 'Iraqi nationalism; and, although 'Iraq was recognized by the League and the United States as a region to which Article 22 of the Covenant applied, Anglo-'Iraqi relations were determined by a series of bilateral agreements. After being driven out of Damascus by the French, the Emir Feisal was elected King of 'Iraq in 1922 and governed under the advice of a British High Commissioner. In 1930 Great Britain and 'Iraq concluded a new treaty of perpetual alliance and amity, which came into effect upon the termination of the mandate two years later, when 'Iraq entered the League of Nations. The central provision of the treaty is, that in the event of either Power becoming engaged in war, the other will immediately come to its aid as an ally, and in the event of imminent menace of war the two Powers will immediately concert together the necessary measures of defence.<sup>2</sup> To this end, 'Iraq affords Great Britain certain military facilities on 'Iraqi territory.<sup>3</sup> This instrument, which remains in force for

<sup>1</sup> These are territories which were transferred from Persia to the Ottoman Empire in 1913, and thus became part of 'Iraq. The oil concession for these territories, however, remained with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 3627 (1930).

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 157-8 below.

twenty-five years, regulates the present relations between the two countries.

Two of 'Iraq's frontiers have given cause for anxiety, the Turkish and the Arabian. Turkey did not recognize the independence of 'Iraq until the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, when she renounced her rights and titles in Palestine, Syria, Cyprus, Egypt, the Sudan and Mesopotamia. The disputed northern frontier of 'Iraq was defined by the League in 1925, in an award which gave the Mosul vilayet to 'Iraq; financial arrangements were made to compensate Turkey for the loss of the oil resources. The mountainous nature of the northern frontier district, and the lack of good communications between Anatolia and 'Iraq, would be hindrances to deliberate aggression by Turkey; and since 1925 the relations between Turkey and 'Iraq have been correct, and in recent years cordial.

The Arabian frontier on the south-west has been a more continuous anxiety, owing to the raids on 'Iraqi territory by Arab tribes which were nominally subjects of Ibn Saud. An improvement in relations after 1930 led to the signature of a Saudi-'Iraqi treaty of alliance in 1936.<sup>1</sup>

The military agreement of 1922 between Great Britain and 'Iraq recognized the principle that the 'Iraqi government should accept responsibility for the internal and external security of 'Iraq as soon as possible, and that British military assistance should therefore be 'progressively reduced with all possible expedition'. This end was achieved, with certain qualifications, by the treaty of alliance of 1930.<sup>2</sup> Its provisions are as follows. The two Powers are bound to come to each other's aid in war.

'The aid of His Majesty the King of 'Iraq in the event of war or the imminent menace of war will consist in furnishing to His Britannic Majesty on 'Iraq territory all facilities and assistance in his power including the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes and means of communication.'

In order to fulfil this alliance, and to ensure the permanent maintenance and protection in all circumstances of the essential communications of the British Empire, 'Iraq allows Great Britain to choose sites for air bases both in the vicinity of Basra and to the west of the Euphrates, and to maintain forces on 'Iraqi territory at these localities, on the understanding that they shall not constitute in any manner an occupation nor in any way prejudice the sovereign rights of 'Iraq. An annexure to the treaty dealt in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 162 below.

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 3627 (1930).



detail with these forces. Great Britain should maintain forces at Hinaidi and Mosul for five years from the entry into force of the treaty, in order to enable 'Iraqi forces to be organized to replace them ; thereafter British forces should be stationed at the localities mentioned in the treaty. To establish identity in training and equipment between the 'Iraqi and British armies, Great Britain undertook to supply 'Iraq with military and naval and air instruction, advisers and armaments, and 'Iraq undertook not to seek such instruction elsewhere nor to use armaments and equipment differing in type from British. 'Iraq further undertook to afford all possible facilities for the movement, transport, and storage of British forces, arms, and supplies.

' These facilities shall cover the use of the roads, railways, waterways, ports and aerodromes of 'Iraq, and His Britannic Majesty's ships shall have general permission to visit the Shatt-al-Arab <sup>1</sup> on the understanding that His Majesty the King of 'Iraq is given prior notification of visits to 'Iraq ports.'

By the terms of the treaty Mosul has already ceased to be an air base and Hinaidi also will shortly be evacuated. A new air base has been established on the west bank of the Euphrates at Dhibban, which is on the Cairo-Baghdad air route, much farther than Hinaidi from the capital, and has the Euphrates as a possible line of defence.

'Iraqi government forces consist of the 'Iraq Army, the 'Iraq Police, and the Royal 'Iraqi Air Force. The 'Iraq Army, 20,000 strong and armed and equipped on the scale of the Indian Army, consists of 3 cavalry regiments, 5 mountain batteries, 5 field batteries, 21 battalions, and one motor machine-gun company. The 'Iraq Police, whose total strength is 9,000, consists of one mounted regiment and one dismounted company, one motor unit, and a camel corps. The Royal 'Iraqi Air Force consists of two squadrons.<sup>2</sup>

British forces in 1938 consisted of two bomber squadrons and a bomber transport squadron of the Royal Air Force at Dhibban, a bomber squadron at Shaibah (near Basra), and a general reconnaissance squadron at Basra, together with an armoured car company. There are also three companies of 'Iraq levies at Hinaidi, three at Dhibban, and a company each at Shaibah and Basra.<sup>3</sup>

The distribution of these forces is determined by the necessities

<sup>1</sup> The Shatt-al-Arab is the final stretch of the Euphrates and Tigris between Al Qurna, where they unite, and the Persian Gulf.

<sup>2</sup> Cole, *Imperial Military Geography*, 9th ed., p. 334.

<sup>3</sup> *Air Force List*, January 1938.

of the time. The concentration near Baghdad is in view of any disturbances in the north and north-east. The motor unit and camel corps of the 'Iraq Police guard the Arabian frontier, supported by the squadron at Shaibah. The squadron at Basra protects imperial interests and the air route in the Persian Gulf.

## Middle Eastern Interests : II

*Arabia and the Persian Gulf*

THE present political divisions of the Arabian peninsula are as follows :

(i) *Saudi Arabia*, consisting of the dominions of King Ibn Saud : (a) The kingdom of Nejd, the home of the Wahabi sect of Islam and of Ibn Saud ; (b) The kingdom of the Hejaz, the Holy Province of Islam, containing the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina ; (c) Asir, nominally an independent sheikhdom, but in effect part of Ibn Saud's territory ; (d) El Hasa, on the Persian Gulf.

(ii) *The Yemen*, an independent State under the Imam of Sana.

(iii) *Aden and the Aden Protectorate*, under the British Colonial Office.

(iv) *The Principalities of the Persian Gulf*, consisting of the sultanate of Oman and Muscat, the six sheikhdoms of Trucial Oman,<sup>1</sup> the sheikhdom of Qatar, the sheikhdom of Bahrein, and the sultanate of Kuwait, all of which are under British protection.

*(a) British Interests*

Arabia occupies a position of great importance on the lines of British imperial communications. For more than 2,000 miles its western and southern coasts flank the main sea route between Great Britain and the East. For more than 1,500 miles its northern frontier and eastern coast flank the air route to the East. Great Britain possesses or controls the four corners of the peninsula—Aqaba, Aden, Oman, and Kuwait—and controls also the whole of its south coast and three-quarters of its east coast.

The western coast of Arabia, which forms the eastern shore of the Red Sea, is under the sovereignty of the two independent Arabian rulers, and it is a British interest that so long as Great Britain has friendly relations with those rulers it should remain so ; for hostile control of it would endanger the coasts of Egypt and the Sudan, and would make the Red Sea route impracticable. Part of the western shore of the narrow Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb is held by Italy, whose position has been strengthened by the

<sup>1</sup> ' The list of the Trucial Chiefs in 1936 consisted of the Shaykhs of Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dibai, Rasu'l Khaymah, Sharjah and Ummu'l Qawayn,' (A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs for 1936*, p. 791, n.)

fortification of Assab<sup>1</sup>; but Italy has no foothold on the Yemeni coast opposite. 'It has always been,' said Mr. Eden, 'and it is to-day, a major British interest that no great Power should establish itself on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. I need hardly add that this applies to ourselves no less than to others.'<sup>2</sup> The most important port on this coast, Aqaba, in the north, is at present under British mandatory administration.<sup>3</sup>

Great Britain has brought the whole of the southern coast of Arabia under her rule or protectorate, in order to prevent any other Power from endangering British naval command of the Indian Ocean by establishing a position there. This coast, unlike the eastern Arabian coast, is easily accessible only by sea; it is cut off from effective land access by the great Arabian desert. The only harbour of importance is Aden, which was purchased by Great Britain in 1837.<sup>4</sup> Aden is the only fortified British port between Malta and Bombay: it is about midway between Port Said and Bombay. It is not only an essential oil-fuel and bunkering station on the sea route to the East, but also an important *entrepôt* for the local trade of Arabia, the Somalilands, and Abyssinia. With the increase of Italian power on the west side of the Red Sea the importance of Aden has been enhanced; it is only 120 miles from the nearest Italian territory. The island of Perim, which lies in the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, was occupied in 1857 and forms part of the Colony of Aden. It has a small harbour and is a cable station; it has been used as a fuelling station. The island of Socotra, which lies on the direct route to India off Cape Guardafui, is a British protectorate under the Aden government; it is undefended but has a good harbour at Kalenzia.

Control of the eastern coast of Arabia is even more important for British naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean than control of the southern coast. Not only has the eastern coast better harbours; it is also far more easily accessible, whether by way of the Euphrates valley (the line of approach of France and Germany in the last 150 years) or by way of the Iranian plateau (the line of approach of Russia). Kuwait was suggested by General Chesney as the terminus of the proposed Euphrates railway in 1850, and again as the terminus of the Baghdad railway

<sup>1</sup> See p. 131 above, for Italy's acquisition of Dumeirah.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, July 19, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 153 above.

<sup>4</sup> The Colony of Aden consists of the peninsula of Aden, occupied in 1839; the peninsula of Little Aden, purchased in 1868; and the coastal strip between the two, purchased in 1882 and 1888; its total area is seventy-five square miles. Until 1937 it was part of the province of Bombay, under the government of India; it was then created a separate colony, under the Colonial Office.

early in the twentieth century. It has therefore become a major British interest that no other Power should establish a naval base or fortified port on the Persian Gulf.<sup>1</sup> Through the establishment of a general protectorate over the principalities of the Gulf, Great Britain now in effect controls the port of Kuwait, which is the best natural harbour on the Gulf, the Bahrein Islands, where her own naval headquarters in the Gulf are situated, and Muscat, which is a British port of call. Since 1932 this coast has acquired added importance for Britain through the transference to it from the Iranian coast of the air route to the East.<sup>2</sup> There are airports at Kuwait, Bahrein, Dibai on the coast of Trucial Oman, and Gwadar on the coast of Baluchistan, which belongs to Muscat.<sup>3</sup>

Great Britain also polices the Gulf under certain treaties with the coastal rulers, in order to enforce peace among them, to protect the commerce of the Gulf, and to suppress piracy, the slave trade, and the arms traffic.

On the northern frontier of the Arabian peninsula, the Saudi Kingdom marches with Transjordan and 'Iraq, flanking the British air-route to the East and the Kirkuk-Haifa pipe-line, and within striking distance of the 'Iraqi and Iranian oilfields. It is therefore a British interest that this desert frontier should be both defined and respected, and that the seasonal movements of Bedouin tribesmen, and isolated and irresponsible raids, should not develop into major clashes between States.

Finally, Great Britain has general interests in Arabia of a religious and political nature. Arabia is the birthplace and centre of the Mohammedan religion, and contains the Holy Places to which pilgrimage is made from all over the Islamic world. Moreover, the ruler of Arabia, Ibn Saud, is the greatest of the Arab kings. Good relations with the Saudi Kingdom are therefore important to an Empire containing 100 million Moslems, and whose interests are bound up with those of the Arab nations of Egypt, Palestine, and 'Iraq.

Great Britain also has economic interests in Arabia, especially with regard to oil. Oil has been found in the Bahrein Islands, where production began in 1934, and in El Hasa on the mainland, where production began in 1938; it is supposed to exist also in the hinterland of the coastal principalities of the Gulf, in the Hadhramaut, and in the Farasan Islands in the Red Sea.

<sup>1</sup> See above, Lansdowne's declaration, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 169 below.

<sup>3</sup> From April 9, 1938, the Imperial Airways stopping-places between Basra and Karachi are Bahrein, Dibai, and Gwadar.



(b) British Relations with Arabian States

The hegemony of the Arabian peninsula was contested between King Hussein of the Hejaz and Sultan Ibn Saud of Nejd from 1911 until 1925, when Hussein was totally defeated and Ibn Saud conquered the Hejaz. British policy towards the Arabs in that period was pro-Sharifian, supporting Hussein and his sons<sup>1</sup>; but Great Britain's relations with Ibn Saud had always been friendly,<sup>2</sup> and she at once accepted him as the unifier of Arabia. Since 1925 Ibn Saud has still further increased his power,<sup>3</sup> and has become one of the chief factors with which British policy in the Middle East has to reckon.

British interests are involved not only in Ibn Saud's agreements with Great Britain, but also in his agreements with 'Iraq and Transjordan, and in his relations with the principalities of the Persian Gulf. The chief agreement between Saudi Arabia and Great Britain is the Treaty of Jiddah of 1927. This abrogated the treaty signed at Qatif in 1915, and affirmed British recognition of the complete and absolute independence of Saudi Arabia.<sup>4</sup> Each party undertook to prevent its territories being used as a base for activities directed against the peace and tranquillity of the other's territories, and agreed to respect 'the principles of international law in force between independent governments'. Ibn Saud undertook to maintain friendly and peaceful relations with the Gulf Chiefs, for whose foreign relations Great Britain is responsible.<sup>5</sup> This treaty established the relations between Great Britain and Saudi Arabia on a friendly and stable basis, through the frank British recognition of Ibn Saud's power; and in 1930 there arrived in Arabia the first accredited British Minister to the Saudi State.

The problems which affect Anglo-Saudi relations include that of Palestine as well as a number of less important questions. Ibn Saud has not yet relinquished his claim to Aqaba; and he has in the past maintained that the Hejaz Railway, which runs partly through his territories, should be owned and controlled as

<sup>1</sup> Feisul, who led the Arab Revolt and became King of 'Iraq, and Abdulla, who became Emir of Transjordan.

<sup>2</sup> In 1914 Sir Percy Cox sent Captain Shakespear from Mesopotamia to gain the alliance of Ibn Saud against the Turks; but after the death of Shakespear in January, 1915, the British government concentrated on the pro-Sharifian policy which was carried to success by T. E. Lawrence.

<sup>3</sup> In 1925 he conquered and annexed the Hejaz; in 1930 he acquired Asir; in 1934 he severely defeated the Yemen.

<sup>4</sup> By the Treaty of Qatif Great Britain had recognized the independence of Ibn Saud's territories, but Ibn Saud agreed not to enter into relations with, nor to alienate territory to, any Power but Great Britain, and to refrain from aggression against the Gulf Sheikhs. The treaty of 1927 was modified by an exchange of notes in October, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 2951 (1927).

a whole, and that the sections in French and British territory should contribute to the repair of the Saudi-Arabian section.<sup>1</sup> The Saudi province of El Hasa is crossed between Basra and Bahrein by the British air route down the Arabian shore of the Persian Gulf, and it would be convenient if Ibn Saud would grant the British government certain facilities on his territory. The need for these facilities grows less, however, as the range and power of aircraft increase. The same region has acquired new importance from the discovery of oil in Bahrein, and on Dammam Dome on the mainland opposite Bahrein. The Sheikhs of Kuwait and Bahrein, in 1913 and 1914 respectively, agreed not to grant oil concessions without the approval of the British government. Similar agreements were concluded with other Trucial Sheikhs in 1922. Ibn Saud is naturally under no such constraint, and the question has therefore been raised of the inland boundaries of the Trucial Sheikhdoms, which there has never hitherto been any cause to define, and which must sooner or later be the subject of negotiation between Ibn Saud and Great Britain.

The northward expansion of Nejd after the War created an acute Saudi-'Iraqi frontier problem. The Treaty of Muhammarah in 1922, which was concluded in the presence of a British official, defined the nationality of the frontier tribes, bound the two governments to prevent raids, and provided for a frontier delimitation committee which afterwards embodied its decisions in the Uqair Protocols.<sup>2</sup> The Bahra Agreement of 1925 endorsed these frontiers.<sup>3</sup> There was considerable tension between 1927 and 1930 owing to an attack upon 'Iraq by dissident Saudi tribes; but in 1930 Ibn Saud and Feisul had a meeting on a British warship in the Gulf, and in 1931 a bon-voisinage treaty and an extradition treaty were concluded between the two governments. In 1936 this rapprochement was sealed by the conclusion of the Saudi-'Iraqi alliance which has come to be known as the Arab Pact.<sup>4</sup>

The Saudi-Transjordanian frontier problem was first discussed between Great Britain and Ibn Saud during the Nejdi-Hejazi

<sup>1</sup> The main obstacle to the repair and subsequent operation of the Saudi Arabian Section is one of finance. Ibn Saud has based his claim to control the Hejaz Railway on the grounds that it was built by voluntary subscriptions from the entire Moslem world, and is thus a *waqf*, or pious foundation, whose management should naturally be in the hands of the Power that has succeeded the Ottoman Empire as keeper of the Holy Places. The conference between Great Britain, France, and Saudi Arabia at Haifa in 1928, to recondition the railway, broke down because the Wahhabi delegate insisted upon raising the question of ownership.

<sup>2</sup> *Report on the Administration of Iraq, April 1922-March 1923*, pp. 183-6. British White Paper, Cmd. 2566 (1935).

<sup>3</sup> *Report on Iraq for 1931*, appendices L and K.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 173-4 below.

War in 1925. The Haddah Agreement of that year denied Ibn Saud his demand for a corridor to Syria between Transjordan and 'Iraq, and established instead a corridor about sixty miles wide connecting Transjordan with 'Iraq. The Saudi conquest of the Hejaz, and the consequent British annexation to Transjordan of the Aqaba-Maan region, enlarged the area of the disputed Transjordanian frontier. During the negotiation of the Treaty of Jiddah, notes were exchanged between Great Britain and the Saudi State, whereby the former claimed the Aqaba-Maan region, and Ibn Saud, although dissenting, promised to maintain the *status quo* until a favourable settlement could be found.<sup>1</sup> After several years of tension due to frontier raids and disputes, the Emir Abdulla and King Ibn Saud formally recognized each other's governments in 1933, and concluded a treaty of friendship and bon voisinage.<sup>2</sup> These have led to a great improvement in relations, although the frontier remains unsettled.

By the Jiddah Treaty of 1927, as by previous treaty commitments, Ibn Saud undertook to respect the independence and integrity of the principalities of the Persian Gulf. The Gulf chief with whom Ibn Saud has been most concerned is the Sultan of Kuwait. Frontiers and neutral zones between Nejd and Kuwait, as between Nejd and 'Iraq, were settled by the Muhammarah Treaty of 1922. In 1936, after an economic struggle between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in which the latter was worsted, the negotiation of a commercial treaty was agreed to. The chief issue between the other Gulf principalities and Saudi Arabia, which forms their hinterland, is the demarcation of frontiers, which has never been necessary or possible before, but now is important because of the possibility of oil being discovered in those regions.

The frontier between the Yemen and the Aden Protectorate was the cause of friction between the Yemen and Great Britain from the collapse of the Turkish Empire until 1934. In that year a treaty of friendship and co-operation was signed by which Great Britain recognized Yemeni independence, and both parties agreed to observe the existing frontier for the duration of the treaty, which was to be forty years.<sup>3</sup> Prior to signature the Imam of the Yemen agreed to evacuate certain parts of the Protectorate which were in his occupation.

The Aden Protectorate, which includes the Hadhramaut, covers an area of about 42,000 square miles, 'bounded on the south by the Colony of Aden and the Gulf of Aden, on the west and north by the kingdom of the Yemen and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 2951 (1927), note 2, p. 5. See p. 153 above.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 4691 (1934).

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 4752 (1934).

and on the east by the Sultanate of Oman'.<sup>1</sup> The two chief Arab rulers in this area are the Qaiti Sultan of Mukalla and the Kathiri Sultan of Saiun. In 1888 Great Britain established a protectorate over the Qaiti Sultanate by a treaty, which gave her the control of Qaiti foreign relations.<sup>2</sup> By an agreement of 1918 both Qaitis and Kathiris recognized 'that the province of the Hadhramaut shall be one province, the said province being an appanage of the British Empire', and the Kathiri Sultan formally adhered to the Anglo-Qaiti treaty of 1888.<sup>3</sup> In 1937 the governor and commander-in-chief of the Aden Colony was appointed to be governor and commander-in-chief of the Protectorate,<sup>4</sup> and a British resident was appointed to Mukalla.

The chief effect of British influence has been the enforcement of tribal peace, especially between the Qaitis and Kathiris themselves.<sup>5</sup> This has been a difficult task, involving no less than sixty truces between hostile tribes. British influence has also brought a considerable development of communications. 'The British Protectorate,' said *The Times*, 'has so far been mainly confined to the control of the foreign relations of the chiefs; but there are indications that in the future British advice on technical questions is likely to be invited rather than endured.'<sup>6</sup>

'There is, and there is contemplated, no direct British administration in the Hadhramaut; there is only the desire to help the native rulers to govern more efficiently, to secure peace in their domains, to bring to them such modern ideas as the inhabitants are beginning to demand.'<sup>7</sup>

In the nineteenth century Great Britain extended her sphere of influence over all the independent chiefs of the western shore of the Gulf, and they are now all under her protection. The Sultanate of Oman and Muscat is virtually a British protectorate. There is a British resident at Muscat and the Government of India maintain a postal and telegraph office there. Trucial Oman is composed of six separate sheikhdoms,<sup>8</sup> whose relations with Great Britain are defined by two main treaties: that of 1853, for the suppression of piracy and the cessation of hostilities at sea between the signatories, and the enforcement of peace by Great Britain;

<sup>1</sup> Aden Protectorate Order, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Report on the Social, Economic and Political Condition of the Hadhramaut*, Colonial No. 123, p. 169 (H.M. Stationery Office, 1937).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>4</sup> Aden Protectorate Order, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> See H. St. J. Philby, 'British Bombs over Arabia', *World Review*, January 1938.

<sup>6</sup> January 6, 1937.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Williams, *Great Britain and the East*, January 20, 1938, p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 160, n., above.

and that of 1892, forbidding the conclusion of treaties with, or the cession of territory to, any other Power. The Sheikdom of Qatar is bound by treaties identical with those between Great Britain and Trucial Oman. The Sheikdom of Bahrein is bound by the treaty of 1892 forbidding, in effect, relations with any Power save Britain. Between 1927 and 1934 the Iranian government several times laid formal claim to sovereignty over these islands, which was repudiated by Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> The Sultanate of Kuwait, whose independence is of considerable importance to Great Britain, has been defended by her against threats from Turkey in 1898, and from Saudi Arabia in 1919. In 1899, as a result of the former, a British protectorate was formally established over Kuwait, and there is now a British resident there.

(c) British Forces in Arabia and the Persian Gulf

Great Britain has defensive commitments in two parts of Arabia: the Colony of Aden, and the principalities of the Gulf.

In 1928 the entire defence of Aden was given to the Royal Air Force. There are now one bomber squadron and an armoured car section in the Colony, together with two dismounted companies and a machine-gun troop of Protectorate native levies. There is also fixed armament for coastal defence.

The headquarters of British ships in the Persian Gulf is now Bahrein, from which a small squadron patrols the Gulf.<sup>2</sup> The defence of British interests in the Gulf depends also upon the Royal Air Force in 'Iraq, a squadron of which is based at Basra for that reason.

*Iran*

British interests in Iran are primarily economic and secondarily strategic. The strategical position of Iran is comparable to that of Afghanistan; together they form a great barrier of mountain and desert plateau, the former separating Russia from the Indian Ocean as the latter separates Russia from the Indian continent. The main importance of Iran to the British Empire used to be as a buffer preventing Russia's southward expansion to warm-water harbours, but at present the danger of such expansion to British interests is negligible. After the War, Iran acquired a new importance as a position either on, or flanking, the overland air route from Europe to India; it may yet have further importance as the territory through which any railway linking India with the Mediterranean must run. The prospect of a trans-Iranian railway from west to east, however, which would join the 'Iraqi with the

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs for 1934*, pp. 221-4.

<sup>2</sup> Its base is Bombay.



Indian railway system, has been regarded unfavourably in Iran as likely to extend British influence throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> The trans-Iranian railway at present under construction, therefore, runs from north to south, so as to tap the Caspian basin, and will join Bandar-i-Gaz on the Caspian with Bandar Shahpur on the Persian Gulf, by way of Teheran, Hamadan, Dizful, and Ahwaz. Thus, while this railway is intended not to be susceptible to British control, it will provide a possible route for Russian penetration.

Shortly before the War the development of its considerable oil resources gave Iran an added importance to Great Britain, in view of the absence of adequate oil supplies within the Empire. Iran now has the fifth largest production of the world's oil-producing countries, and is Great Britain's second source of petroleum, after Venezuela and the Dutch West Indies. Iranian output has increased very rapidly of late and amounted in 1937 to over 10 million tons. In view of the known resources of the country, this figure could be greatly exceeded if necessary.<sup>2</sup> The two main oilfields are at Masjid-i-Sulaiman and Haft Khel, in Arabistan, the south-western province that forms part of the low-lying Mesopotamian basin. There is a pipe-line down the Karun valley from Masjid-i-Sulaiman to Abadan, joined at Kut Abdulla by another line from Haft Khel; at Abadan there is one of the largest and most up-to-date refineries in existence. The security of these oilfields and pipe-lines, and of the refinery at Abadan and the port of Muhammarah, depends not only on British relations with Iran but also on the British position in 'Iraq.

British and Iranian interests are largely interdependent: royalties from the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company form a considerable part of the Iranian revenue, and a large part of the export trade of Iran is carried in British ships to British markets. There have, however, been several disputes and conflicts of interest between the two countries.

The chief point of contact between the interests of the British and Iranian governments is the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In 1914 the British government purchased a controlling interest in the company, in order to ensure a Persian supply of oil-fuel for the navy under a contract between the Company and the Admiralty. This gave the status and affairs of the Company an immediate political importance, which was shown at once in the British invasion of Mesopotamia, as soon as Turkey entered the War, in

<sup>1</sup> Difficulties with the Iranian government led to the closing down of the Iranian section of the Nushki-Duzdap railway through Baluchistan; it now terminates at Nokkundi on the frontier.

<sup>2</sup> See *Petroleum Press Service*, April 8, 1938.

order to defend the oilfields and pipe-lines. In 1932, as a result of the reduction in their royalties owing to the world crisis, the Iranian government cancelled the Company's original concession, which was due to last till 1961. The British government immediately submitted their complaint to the League Council, and a new concession was agreed upon after difficult negotiation. On the one hand, the area of the Company's concession was reduced, but within the new concession the range of its operations was extended more widely. On the other hand, the Iranian government acquired a greater interest in the total business of the Company and its subsidiaries throughout the world, and were guaranteed a minimum aggregate payment by the Company of £750,000 per annum.

The Iranian government has asserted its independence of British influence in other ways. In 1932 it refused to continue the arrangement whereby Imperial Airways used the aerodromes on the Iranian coast at Bushire and Bandar Abbas, and demanded that a route through central Iran be followed, on the grounds that the coastal route did not benefit Iran and was liable to intensify British interests and British control along the Iranian coast. But after the lapse of the former agreement Imperial Airways established the route along the western and southern coast of the Gulf.<sup>1</sup> There have also been controversies with Iran over the status of the Bahrein Islands, which Iran has claimed without success, and over certain islands under Iranian sovereignty in the Gulf, such as Qishm, to which the British navy had had undisputed access for many years.

### *Afghanistan*

Afghanistan is a buffer between Russia and India. Its chief physical feature is the Hindu Kush, the great mountain barrier dividing the plains of Turkestan from those of northern India. Its importance for Great Britain has always been twofold : as the first line of defence against an invasion of India from the north, and as an independent source of encouragement and material assistance for turbulent tribes on the Indian frontier.

Most of the roads of Afghanistan are practicable only for camel transport ; the few motor roads that have been cut through the Hindu Kush are blocked by snow for half the year. The two main trans-Afghan routes are as follows : (i) from the Termez rail-head on the Oxus, via the new motor-roads over the Ak Robat or the Khawak Passes, to Kabul, and thence to Landi Khana and Peshawar ; this route is suitable for motor transport,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, June 13 and 22, 1932 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 267, cols. 30 and 1080).

though the Hindu Kush passes are over 11,000 feet and clear of snow only for a few months in the year ; (ii) from the Kushk Post rail-head over the Ardawan Pass to Herat, thence through Farah, Girishk, and Kandahar to Chaman, the Indian rail-head. This road is suitable for mechanical transport throughout and passes through the less mountainous part of western Afghanistan ; from the physical point of view it presents the fewest difficulties for troop movements, despite the long waterless stretch between Farah and Girishk ; but it does not even approach European standards of construction. There is also a road joining Kandahar with Kabul, via Ghazni, which is practicable for wheeled vehicles and open throughout the year.

A second British interest in Afghanistan is the effect which stable and effective Afghan government, or its reverse, has upon the maintenance of order among the frontier tribes. Tribes such as the Mohmands and Wazirs dwell on either side of the Afghan-Indian frontier, and disorderly elements can pass, practically at will, from one country to the other. If a strong government is lacking in Afghanistan, tribal disturbances along the frontier always involve the possibility that India and Afghanistan themselves might become involved in war.

British policy in the nineteenth century aimed at establishing a strong and friendly Afghanistan in alliance with Great Britain for mutual protection ; the two Afghan wars are now admitted to be mistakes which did not advance British interests. All agreements with Afghanistan have had that aim, and India's strategical policy, like her frontier railway policy, has always kept that object in view. At the end of the Second Afghan War, Afghanistan accepted British control of her foreign policy in exchange for a qualified guarantee against external aggression. After the collapse of the Russian Empire, however, Afghanistan desired to detach herself from British tutelage, and in 1919 she delivered an unprovoked attack upon India. After the defeat of the Afghan army and an aerial bombardment of Kabul the government of India entered into a treaty with Afghanistan, under the terms of which it formally abandoned the control over Afghan foreign policy which it had exercised for forty years, and established a British Minister at Kabul.<sup>1</sup> Since then Anglo-Afghan relations have been friendly ; and subsequent to the disturbances following the dethronement of Amanullah Afghanistan has achieved a measure of peace and stability, largely owing to the support given by Great Britain to Nadir Shah.

It remains true, however, that Great Britain would not acquiesce in the absorption of any part of Afghanistan by Russia. In 1934,

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 324 (1919), No. 67.

the same year as Russia, Afghanistan entered the League of Nations.

The Afghan army has been modernized since the War, and is said to consist of about 100,000 regular troops, including a small air force officered by Afghans trained in Europe. But it is unlikely to be sufficiently equipped or trained to resist a powerful modern army in open warfare ; and the real strength of Afghanistan lies in the warlike tribes and mountain barriers of the country. The tribes, however, are unlikely to fight outside their own districts, so that co-ordinated national effort is almost impossible.

If Russia were to invade Afghanistan, nothing could prevent her occupation of Afghan Turkestan north of the Hindu Kush. But, if the Afghan army could hold the Hindu Kush for a sufficient time, Great Britain could send help to Kabul and at the same time concentrate upon defending the open country between Kandahar and Herat. If, on the other hand, Afghanistan willingly accepted Russia as an ally and co-operated in an invasion of India, the British position would be much more serious. Such a conflict would be fought out largely on or beyond the North-West Frontier of India, and any force of aircraft that could keep the air from India should make it impossible for troops to traverse the various gorges through which the roads into India defile ; the British position on the North-West Frontier, properly supported from the air, should be able to hold the invaders until reinforcements came to the assistance of India. A conflict of this description would soon require the intervention of military and air forces far exceeding the resources of the Army in India. Though road, rail, and air have simplified the problems of an invading Russia, they have equally eased the position of the defence of India.

### *The Conflict of Interests in the Middle East*

The conflict of interests in the Middle East to-day is no longer, as in the past two centuries, one of rival imperialisms alone. Since the War a new factor has appeared, more powerful than these imperialisms, in the spread of Western nationalism to the Middle Eastern countries. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, 'Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan have each acquired a national self-consciousness which is acute and assertive in proportion to its novelty. In the last twenty years these countries have entered, on the one hand, into an increasingly active participation, both economically and politically, in the life of the westernized world ; and on the other hand have thrown off European control, and have shown their intention of permitting European penetration and assistance either on their own terms or not at all. The first tendency is

illustrated by the increase in the number of Middle Eastern Members of the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> The second is illustrated by the attainment of independence by 'Iraq and Egypt, and the approach towards it of Syria and Lebanon and Palestine and Transjordan, and also by the policy of the Iranian government with regard to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's concession and the Imperial Airways route along the Iranian coast,<sup>2</sup> which is typical of the Middle Eastern attitude towards the European great Powers.

The Middle East is the core of the Islamic world, and all the Middle Eastern countries except the Lebanon are predominantly Moslem. But there is little likelihood as yet of a Pan-Islamic movement in the Middle East. Religion is becoming less important as a binding force than antipathy to the West, and local self-interest continues to predominate over all unifying emotions. There are two main forces making for Middle Eastern co-operation, one external and the other internal. The former is the pressure of European great Powers, which has produced a natural solidarity of the Middle Eastern small Powers in defence of their common interests. This was exemplified by the Middle Eastern Pact of 1937 between Iran, Turkey, 'Iraq and Afghanistan, an *entente* due to the appearance of an external danger in the shape of successful Italian aggression against Abyssinia. The latter is the Arab movement, and this is a force that does not touch Turkey or Iran or Afghanistan, though it covers the whole of the Near East south of the Taurus. Although the spread of nationalism may bring the policy of an individual Middle Eastern State into conflict with British interests, it has not brought the danger of a concerted attack by the Middle Eastern countries upon the British position in the Middle East. It is on the whole recognized by the Middle Eastern Powers that Great Britain and France have no aggressive intentions, and that in the last ten years they have been steadily reducing their political claims in that region. What jeopardizes this confidence is Great Britain's policy in Palestine, which has aroused intense hostility among Moslems in general and the Arab peoples in particular, and is not without its effect on Anglo-Egyptian relations. The attitude expressed by the average Arab is that he prefers the British to the Italians and French and other Europeans, since the British are more just and straightforward in their dealings ; but that he cannot understand why Great Britain insists on a policy in Palestine which is tenaciously opposed by a

<sup>1</sup> Iran is the only Middle Eastern country which was an original Member of the League. Turkey and 'Iraq were elected in 1932, Afghanistan in 1934, and Egypt in 1936 ; Syria is a prospective candidate for membership. The only major Middle Eastern Power which is not in the League is Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 169 above.



united Arab people, and has gone far to destroy the old confidence and friendship.

The greatest change in the Middle Eastern scene has been the appearance of the Middle Eastern nations in an active and no longer simply a passive rôle ; but there has also been a change in the rival imperialisms involved in that region. Before the War, these imperialisms were the British, the Russian, the German, and the French. Since the War, Germany has only recently reappeared as a factor in the Middle East ; Russia's policy has become one of fraternization rather than of ascendancy ; and Great Britain and France, after the temporary acquisition of unprecedented power in the Middle East by the Peace Treaties, have abandoned all save the strategic points necessary for the maintenance of their positions in the Mediterranean and communications with India and the Far East. On the other hand, a new imperialism has appeared, with wide Near Eastern ambitions, in the shape of Italy.

#### (a) The Arabs

The nationalist ambitions of the Arab world have been the dominating political factor in the Near East since the War. They received extreme expression in the Arab Covenant which was formulated by the Arab delegates to the Islamic Congress at Jerusalem in 1931. 'The Arab lands,' ran the first clause, 'are a complete and indivisible whole, and the divisions of whatever nature to which they have been subjected are not approved nor recognized by the Arab nation' ; the second clause said that the Arab countries must aim at the single goal of independence and unification ; the third clause repudiated all colonization of Arab lands.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that the better organized and the more independent Arab States become, the greater is their national particularism and the less interested are they in international Pan-Arab agitation. It is characteristic of the Arabs that they love talking about fraternity, but that, when it comes to action, local and particular interests are the decisive thing. The Pan-Arab movement 'is to-day a movement of sedition and agitation which tends by every means to sap the authority and interests of the Western Powers in the East ; it is of an ideological and sentimental nature ; but one knows that in the East, among masses of illiterate Arabs, the force of certain ideas can have considerable destructive power'.<sup>2</sup>

The sense of Arab fraternity, however, has combined with true

<sup>1</sup> *Survey of International Affairs for 1934*, p. 107, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Georges Meyer, 'Le Conflit des Imperialismes au Levant', *Affaires Étrangères*, November 1937, p. 527.

statesmanship to inspire the series of pacts of alliance and brotherhood which Ibn Saud has contracted with his Arab neighbours, beginning with the generous and conciliatory peace terms which he granted to the Imam of the Yemen after the Arabian War of 1934, which were embodied in a 'treaty of Islamic friendship and Arab brotherhood'. This was followed in 1936 by a Saudi-'Iraqi 'treaty of Arab brotherhood and alliance', containing provisions, almost identical with those of the Saudi-Yemeni treaty, for the peaceful settlement of disputes and co-operation in resistance to aggression, and open to the adherence of other independent Arab States;<sup>1</sup> and by a Saudi-Egyptian treaty. The four independent Arab Powers are thus bound together in a treaty system which may in time be converted into a multilateral treaty linking together all Arab States.<sup>2</sup> This Arab *entente*, including 'Iraq and Egypt, would be a valuable contribution to the strengthening of the whole structure of British interests and alliances in the Middle East, by making for peace and stability, and the maintenance of the *status quo* there, if the prestige of Great Britain were not so gravely damaged by her difficulties in Palestine.

It is over the question of Palestine that the Arab nations have most clearly shown their solidarity. The hostility formerly felt towards France, for what was regarded as her usurpation in Syria, has been transferred since 1933 to Great Britain, for her adherence to the policy of the Balfour Declaration. There have been constant expressions and demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinian Arabs' cause in Syria and Transjordan and 'Iraq and Egypt, and manifestations of sympathy even among the Iranians, who are neither Arab by race nor Sunni by religion. The Arab rulers have played a statesmanlike part in endeavouring to further the interests of the Palestinian Arabs by moderating their violence and mediating between them and the British government. In the summer of 1936 both the Emir Abdulla and the 'Iraqi foreign minister Nuri Pasha intervened in fruitless attempts to bring the Arab strike in Palestine to an end, and this was finally achieved largely through the joint intervention of the Kings of Saudi Arabia and 'Iraq and the Emir of Transjordan.<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian strike emphasized the solidarity of the Arab world; 'the Palestine Arabs', said a writer in *Al Difa'ah* in October

<sup>1</sup> The Yemen adhered to this treaty in 1937. Because of its extension *in potentia* to the whole Arab world it has come to be known as the Arab Pact.

<sup>2</sup> It was suggested in 1936 that the Gulf Chiefs might apply for permission to adhere to the Arab Pact; also that the Sheikh of Bahrein might invite the other Gulf Chiefs to enter into an economic and political union enabling them to act as a single independent Arab State towards the rest of the world (see *Survey of International Affairs for 1936*, p. 793).

<sup>3</sup> See p. 149 above. The Imam of the Yemen also was reported to have associated himself with the appeal of the other Arab rulers.

1936, 'are recognized as part of the Arab federation and therefore they are no longer alone'.<sup>1</sup> On the publication of the report of the Peel Commission the Arab Powers joined with the Arabs of Palestine in opposing the proposal for partition, and the 'Iraqi and Egyptian governments protested against it at Geneva.

The solidarity of Arab feeling, however, is by no means unqualified. There are three strong forces working in a contrary sense: the personal and political rivalry between all Arab political figures, and especially between King Ibn Saud and the Emir Abdulla; the political detachment of Egypt; and the religious differences between the Wahhabi State and the rest of the Arab world. The rivalry between Ibn Saud and Abdulla is the continuation of the rivalry between Ibn Saud and Abdulla's father Hussein. Although Ibn Saud dethroned the head of the Sharifian house in 1925,<sup>2</sup> one of Hussein's sons found a kingdom in 'Iraq and another an emirate in Transjordan; and to-day Abdulla is the most important figure in the Arab world after Ibn Saud himself. Nor has he ever forgotten the ejection of his family from the Hejaz, and the recovery of the Hejaz was the dominating motive of his policy at least until 1933.<sup>3</sup> Abdulla was the chief prospective beneficiary from the proposals of the Peel Commission, and he was the only Arab ruler to give any support to those proposals.<sup>4</sup> Ibn Saud and the government of Abdulla's nephew in 'Iraq combined, says Mr. Philby, 'to resist the minimum concession to the Jews for no other reason than to prevent Abdullah's accession to a throne'.<sup>5</sup>

Between King Ibn Saud and Great Britain there is no real conflict of interests, and Ibn Saud 'has ever envisaged the friendship of Great Britain as a cardinal factor of his political outlook'.<sup>6</sup> The various problems of Anglo-Saudi relations should be easily solved with goodwill on either side. Since the defeat of Hussein in 1925 Britain has not shown any inclination, perhaps for motives of political prudence, to oppose the establishment of Saudi hegemony throughout Arabia. A striking example of this was the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the *Survey of International Affairs for 1936*, p. 740.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 163 above.

<sup>3</sup> See C. C. Lewis, 'Ibn Saud and the Future of Arabia', *International Affairs*, July, 1933, pp. 523-4, and Sir John Chancellor, *ibid.*, p. 532. Abdulla formally recognized Ibn Saud's government in 1933; see p. 165 above.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 152 above.

<sup>5</sup> H. St. J. Philby, 'The Palestine Problem', *Contemporary Review*, September, 1937, p. 208.

<sup>6</sup> H. St. J. Philby, 'Britain and Arabia', *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1935, p. 574. Ibn Saud 'is very fond of saying, "The English are my friends; but I will walk with them only so far as my religion and honour will allow". But he is genius enough to know when to continue to walk even though it is necessary to allow a certain amount of elasticity, both to his religion and to his honour' (Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 529).

conclusion of the commercial struggle between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 1936, which 'proved that Kuwait could not flourish on British naval protection alone without also enjoying the goodwill of the military master of Arabia ; and it looked as if the result of this discovery would be partial transfer, at least *de facto*, of the political control over Kuwait from British to Saudi hands'.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Saud's immediate ambition is a Pan-Arab federation under his own presidency ; his ultimate ambition, the restoration of the Caliphate, for which he would be by far the most favoured candidate. In this there is nothing fundamentally opposed to British interests. The stronger Saudi Arabia becomes, and the closer the union between the Arab States, the less easy will it be for any other European Power to obtain an influence in the Near East that may endanger British interests, and the greater will be the chance of peace and stability in that region. This, however, assumes the satisfactory settlement of the outstanding differences between the Arab world and the British Empire. So long as the problem of Palestine remains unsolved, Great Britain will continue to be associated with Zionism as an object of Arab hatred, and since the sentiment of Arabia is essentially anti-French on account of Syria, the influence of the Western democracies in the Near East will be gravely impaired. Mr. St. John Philby went so far as to say in June, 1935 that under such circumstances, if a European war broke out, 'the Arabs are almost bound to throw their weight into the scale in favour of Germany against Great Britain and France'.<sup>2</sup>

### (b) The Jews

The future of Zionism may turn upon the outcome of the conference between Arab and Jewish representatives and the British government held in London early in 1939.<sup>3</sup> The first reactions to the proposal for a conference were unfavourable on the part of both Arabs and Jews, though the Jewish Agency declared its willingness to take part. There was at first some fear that the Arabs might boycott the conference, in pursuance of their policy of not recognizing the validity of the Balfour Declaration. Invitations were, however, accepted by the governments of neighbouring Arab States, and in order to make possible the representation of the Palestinian Arabs the British government announced the release of those of their leaders who had been deported to the Seychelles, and intimated that they and other

<sup>1</sup> *Survey of International Affairs for 1936*, p. 788.

<sup>2</sup> *International Affairs*, September, 1935, p. 631.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 151 above. Since this was written, the conference has come to an unsuccessful conclusion, and the British government will therefore in due course announce the policy it will follow.

leaders excluded from Palestine would be acceptable as representatives at the London Conference.<sup>1</sup>

(c) The Italian Position

Since the War, Italy has been developing her interests in the Near East as well as in Africa. Her policy aims at strengthening Italian influence throughout the Arab world in general, and in the Yemen in particular.<sup>2</sup>

The Yemen faces, across the Red Sea, the Italian colony of Eritrea, from which Sana, the capital, is as easily accessible via Hodeida as from Aden via Dala. It is in a similar geographical relation to Italian East Africa as is Albania to Italy, forming a natural bridge-head for the development of Italian influence in the Arabian peninsula, and giving Italy a potential pincer-grip upon the southern end of the Red Sea comparable to the British control of its northern end. In 1926, when the Yemen was engaged in a prolonged dispute with Great Britain arising from the occupation by the former of parts of the Aden Protectorate, Italy and the Yemen concluded a treaty of amity and commerce, whereby Italy recognized 'the full and absolute independence of the Yemen', and undertook to supply the Yemen with technical aid, material and personnel.<sup>3</sup> After Anglo-Italian negotiations in 1927 the treaty was declared by the British government not to have affected British interests.<sup>4</sup> It was renewed in 1937, on which occasion the Italians presented the Imam with two tanks, two anti-aircraft guns, and quantities of small arms and ammunition. The Yemen is thus bound to Italy by an older and more intimate agreement than that concluded with Great Britain in 1934. After Signor Mussolini's acceptance of the 'Sword of Islam' near Tripoli in March, 1937, the Imam sent him a message approving his policy towards Islam. The Imam, however, has taken pains to emphasize the independence of his country, and has officially denied all rumours of his having granted far-reaching privileges to a foreign Power.<sup>5</sup> The independence of the Yemen was recognized by Italy in the Anglo-Italian Agreement of April, 1938.

Among the Arab peoples in general, Italian policy at one time made great strides. It is success that impresses the Arabs, and what they admired above all in Italy was her triumphant conquest

<sup>1</sup> Statement by the Colonial Office, December 7 (see *The Times*, December 8, 1938).

<sup>2</sup> For the question of Italy's strategical position in the Red Sea, the fortification of Assab and the acquisition of Dumeirah, see p. 131 above.

<sup>3</sup> *Survey of International Affairs for 1925*, Vol. I, Appendix VIII, pp. 586-7.

<sup>4</sup> Under-Secretary for Dominion Affairs in the House of Lords, July 6, 1927 (*Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, Vol. 68, col. 175).

<sup>5</sup> *L'Orient Arabe*, April 9, 1937; *Journal des Nations*, April 15, 1937.



of Abyssinia in defiance of the League and of the Western Powers. Henceforward, they felt, they had better be on the right side of the Power that had worsted Great Britain. This new prestige of Italy culminated in Signor Mussolini's visit to Libya in March, 1937, when he was presented with 'the Sword of Islam' by Arab chiefs to symbolize Arab devotion to him and to Fascism, and proclaimed the sympathy of Italy for Islam and for the Moslems of the whole world. At the same time Marshal Balbo, Governor of Libya, announced that 'the Duce is the protector of Islam, and as such he exalts the Moslem people'.<sup>1</sup> Italy's prestige was further enhanced among the Arabs by the psychological skill which she showed in such incidents as the public whipping of Jews in Libya at the beginning of 1937. Now that her success is two years old, however, its effects on the Arab mind are wearing off, and she is losing ground. What the racial policy she has lately adopted towards the Jews has done to enhance her position is not yet clear<sup>2</sup>. In any case the Arab world was amused rather than impressed by the incident of the 'Sword of Islam', for Arabs are more responsive to facts than to claims.

It was the prestige of Italy's success in the Abyssinian War that gave her propaganda its power in the Near East in 1936-7. After the imposition of sanctions, Italy took every advantage of the difficulties encountered by France in Tunis and Syria and by Britain in Palestine, and supported the Arabs in order to weaken the position of the two mandatory Powers in the Near East. Thus the pro-Italian attitude of the Syrian and Arabian press during the Abyssinian War has had its counterpart in the constant Italian press-attacks upon Britain, denouncing the repressiveness of her methods of maintaining order in Palestine and brutality of her aerial bombing in the Hadhramaut.<sup>3</sup> Italy has made use of the most diverse means of propaganda : in Italy, the establishment of conferences and academies and journals for the study of Islamic affairs ; in Abyssinia, the construction of a wireless transmitting station and a project for a Moslem university at Harar ; in Arab countries, wireless broadcasts, the cinema, the establishment of Italian schools and hospitals and cultural centres, scholarships and free visits to Italy for Arab students, the appointment of Italian priests to influential posts, subsidies to Arab organizations and newspapers, and even promises of support to rebels against the British and French régimes. These Italian activities have been supplemented by the less overt but equally insidious agents and

<sup>1</sup> *Corriere della Sera*, March 11 and 20, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Since going to press, her attack on Albania has aroused Moslem anger.

<sup>3</sup> Since the conclusion of the Anglo-Italian Agreement these attacks have been mainly carried on by the German press.

propaganda of Germany. The effect of such efforts on the part of the totalitarian Powers is difficult to assess, but it is almost certainly small. Propaganda is apt to be appreciated only in so far as it brings material gain. It has succeeded in complicating and exacerbating a situation which was already extremely difficult ; but it is mistaken to see a causal connexion in the fact that Arab resistance to Great Britain in Palestine crystallized at a time of extreme Anglo-Italian tension. The conflict of Arab and Jew is older than the rivalry of Great Britain and Italy. But the British government were seriously annoyed by the broadcasting of inflammatory anti-British propaganda in Arabic from the station at Bari, and for two years this was an obstacle to good relations between the two Powers. Britain attempted to check such propaganda by a clause in the Anglo-Italian Declaration of January, 1937 ; but the broadcasts continued, and on several occasions the British government stated that they made impossible the improvement of Anglo-Italian relations.<sup>1</sup> They ceased, however, after the conclusion of the Anglo-Italian Agreement in April, 1938.

This Agreement sought to remove all sources of dispute between Great Britain and Italy in the Middle East. Annexe 3 stated that neither Power would seek to impair the independence or integrity of Saudi Arabia or the Yemen, nor to acquire sovereignty or a politically privileged position in those kingdoms. ' In particular they regard it as an essential interest of each of them that no other Power should acquire sovereignty or any privileged position on any part of the coast of the Red Sea which at present belongs to Saudi Arabia or to the Yemen '. Neither Power would intervene in any conflict which might break out between, or within, the States of Saudi Arabia and the Yemen. In respect of the territories lying east and south of Saudi Arabia and the Yemen, where Great Britain had a protectorate, Italy declared that she would not seek to acquire any political influence there, and Great Britain declared that she would undertake no military preparations other than those of a defensive nature. Annexe 4 stated that the two Powers were agreed ' that any attempt by either of them to employ the methods of publicity or propaganda at its disposal in order to injure the interests of the other would be inconsistent with the good relations which it is the object of the present Agreement to establish and maintain '.<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Anglo-Italian Agreement implicitly accepts the idea that Italy has equal interests with Great Britain in

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, December 20, 1937 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 330, col. 586).

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5726 of 1938.

the Near East. It is perhaps Italy's chief gain from the Agreement that such an assumption, although it is not formally given expression, should have been made at all.

(d) The French Position

France abandoned her traditional political interest in the Levant in 1871, in order to concentrate on *revanche* against Germany in Europe and on expansion in North Africa. She revived her Near Eastern interests in 1919, after the defeat of Germany, by accepting mandates for Syria and the Lebanon; but she later again relaxed her hold on that region, and was content to depend upon British force for the protection of her remaining Near Eastern interests. In 1936, following the Anglo-'Iraqi and Anglo-Egyptian treaties, France concluded analogous treaties with Syria and the Lebanon, which left the Palestinians the only Arab people east of Libya who had not yet come within sight of political emancipation. The Franco-Syrian treaty of alliance closely followed the Anglo-'Iraqi: France was to have the use of two Syrian air bases for the duration of the treaty, and to station troops in two districts for the first five years, and the two States were to come to one another's assistance in event of war, when Syria was to place all its facilities at its ally's disposal. Because Francophil sentiments in the Lebanon, which is Christian, are much stronger than in Syria, France was able to make the Franco-Lebanese treaty more favourable to herself, in that it allows her to maintain forces of all three arms in the Lebanon, on terms to be decided later. These treaties are to come into force on the admission of Syria and the Lebanon into the League, which was to be within three years of ratification. But although the treaties have been ratified by Syria and Lebanon, they had not yet been ratified by the French Chamber in March, 1939.

The position of France, as a mandatory Power and as an eastern Mediterranean Power, is dependent on that of Great Britain. The two Powers have virtually identical interests in regard to Arab nationalism, though France is affected by it on a wider scale since it extends to her North African colonies. The relations of Great Britain to Palestine will be always closely bound up with the relations of France to Syria and the Lebanon, as well as to North Africa. The latter will have the duty of maintaining peace between Syria and the Lebanon when they attain their independence, as the former will have the task of maintaining peace between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Moreover, France, like Great Britain, is a Far Eastern Power, and has an essential interest in the maintenance of her air and wireless communications with her Far Eastern empire, as well as the sea route through the

Suez Canal ; she has, moreover, a great financial interest in the Suez Canal. Furthermore, she is largely dependent for her oil supplies upon 'Iraqi oil from the two pipe-lines to Haifa and to Tripoli in the Lebanon. Therefore, though her essential interests in the Middle East are not so large as Great Britain's they are by no means small ; and, to the extent that she abandons her major commitments in the Near East, she becomes dependent for safeguarding her interests upon her British ally.

(e) The British Position

Before the War, Great Britain's diplomacy in the Middle East was aggressive, since she was endeavouring to establish her position in that region against the formidable competition of Russia and Germany. To-day she is established as the greatest Power in the Middle East, and her diplomacy is defensive. Her vital interest in the security of the routes to India and in the oilfields of Mesopotamia and Arabia need not be incompatible with the nationalist aspirations of the Middle Eastern States ; for they share with her the need for peace, security against aggression, and the development of their economic resources.

There are two great desiderata, however, for the maintenance of Great Britain's position. The first is the consolidation of good relations with Saudi Arabia. Because of its geographical position, its leadership of the Arab world, and its military strength, friendship with Saudi Arabia is a vital British interest. Ibn Saud does not love the British since they are of neither his blood nor his religion ; but, as Great Britain is his neighbour on every side, he could not hope, if he wished, to oppose her with success, and there is no Power with which he would rather be on cordial terms. The only real obstacle is a psychological one. His misgivings have on occasion been aroused by the British policy of increasing control over the oil resources of the Gulf and over the Hadhramaut ; and there is therefore perhaps cause for the resumption of negotiations from the point where Sir Gilbert Clayton left them off in 1928, and the conclusion of a new Anglo-Saudi treaty which will finally settle the points at issue between the two countries.<sup>1</sup>

The second, and far more vital, desideratum is the settlement of the Palestine problem, in such a way as to create lasting stability in the Near East. For this purpose, it was cogently argued that constructive and far-sighted additions to the proposals of the Peel Commission were called for<sup>2</sup> ; and Lord Samuel's suggestion

<sup>1</sup> See H. St. J. Philby, ' Britain and Arabia ', *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1935, and ' Arabia To-Day ', *International Affairs*, September, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Round Table*, September, 1937, pp. 751-4.

that ' Great Britain, with the full co-operation of the Zionist Movement, should assist in forming a great confederation of Arab countries ' in the expectation that ' the hinterland would then come to the markets of Palestine ', so far from being an alternative to the Commission's plan, was to be regarded as a necessary complement to it. One of the indispensable conditions for a lasting settlement in Palestine is that a concerted effort should be made by the British and French and the Arabs and the Jews to bring ' Iraq and Syria and the Lebanon and Palestine into a close association that will be not merely economic but also political. The onus of keeping the peace between the various States would be left for the moment to rest on the shoulders of the European Powers that have hitherto held mandates for the guardianship of these countries. This, however, would be merely a provisional treatment of the military problem. If the wards are to become fully adult, they must eventually manage to settle this problem by direct agreement between themselves, and they would be able to take this final step towards genuine political independence when their essential community of interest had been brought out by a practical illustration in the economic sphere.

#### AFRICA AND BRITISH IMPERIAL COMMUNICATIONS

##### (a) East Africa

British territorial interests in East Africa consist of a chain of territories stretching from the southern border of Egypt to the Northern border of the Union of South Africa. They differ from the British dependencies in West Africa in that all but two contain highlands that are suited climatically to white settlement. On the other hand, the fact is a point of similarity between them and the Union of South Africa which, by reason of its anxiety to maintain its present white standards, is interested in their future. Hence the possible developments that may emerge from the Italian régime in Abyssinia may have an important bearing on the future relations of the British East African dependencies with both the Union of South Africa and with Europe. If Italy adopts a policy of militarization and cultural assimilation in Abyssinia, such as France has adopted in her African colonies, the Italian Empire may come into eventual conflict with the Union policy of segregation of European and Bantu, as well as with British administrative principles of indirect rule as practised, for example, in Uganda and Tanganyika. In this connexion Annexe 6 of the Anglo-Italian Agreement is important. It reaffirms the assurances given by the Italian government to the League in June, 1936, to the effect that Italy was ' on her side willing to accept the principle '



that the natives of Italian East Africa should not be compelled to undertake military duties other than local policing and territorial defence.

In February, 1936, a long summary was published in the *Giornale d'Italia* of the report on British interests in Abyssinia presented to the Foreign Office in June, 1935, by an inter-departmental committee presided over by Sir John Maffey, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office. Among other conclusions summarized by the writer it was declared that there were no vital British interests in Abyssinia or in neighbouring countries such as to necessitate British resistance to an Italian conquest of Abyssinia; and that from the standpoint of Imperial defence an independent Abyssinia would be preferable to an Italian Abyssinia, but that the threat to British interests appeared to be remote, and would arise only in the event of a war with Italy.

(b) The Cape Route to the Indian Ocean

The changed conditions in the Mediterranean have emphasized the importance of the Cape route as Great Britain's alternative seaway to her possessions and interests east of Suez. In the first instance its importance is as an alternative route for freight, should passage through the Mediterranean be rendered precarious, owing to hostilities in that area; and in the second and worst instance, that of defeat in the Mediterranean or of navigation through the Suez Canal being denied to Great Britain, the Cape route would become her first line of communication with the Indian Ocean and the countries that surround it. The possibilities of effective naval or aerial attack in the Atlantic Ocean are considerably smaller than in the narrow waters of the Mediterranean, where there is no scope for evasive routing and where geographical conditions favour the submarine and the bombing aeroplane. The Atlantic route need not pass close to any port belonging to a first-class naval Power and, though the future of the Canary Islands and Rio de Oro is uncertain, the maintenance of a striking force in their harbours would prove difficult in the face of British and French naval power.

Despite its greater length, the Cape route is well supplied with harbours where fuel and supplies can be obtained. Freetown (Sierra Leone), 3,000 miles from Southampton, is a defended port and a naval fuelling station; it is also the headquarters of the Sierra Leone Battalion of the King's West African Rifles. Takoridi (Gold Coast) and Walvis Bay also have deep-water harbours. Simonstown, the principal naval base on the route, lies on False Bay near Cape Town, and is the headquarters of the African Station. By the terms of the Smuts-Churchill agreement

of 1921, the Imperial government transferred to the Union government the freehold of the lands and buildings, which comprise the base, together with the responsibility for defending the naval dockyard. The Admiralty continue to maintain and staff the base itself, while the Union maintains and mans the forts that command both the harbour and the dockyard, and guarantees that Simonstown will at all times be in a position to serve as a naval link in the sea communications of the Empire.

Continuing along the route to India, there are important harbours on the east coast of Africa: Durban is a defended harbour and has abundant supplies of good coal from the Natal mines, while farther north in Kenya Colony there is Kilindini, which has been described as the best harbour on the east coast. It is situated on an island, connected with the mainland by a bridge, and has accommodation for six ocean-going vessels with thirty-three feet of water (L.W.O.S.T.) alongside the quay wall: there are facilities for refuelling with oil while cargo is being worked. Dar-es-Salaam is the best harbour in Tanganyika Territory, but under the terms of the mandate it may not be fortified. Durban, Zanzibar, the Seychelles, the Keeling Islands, and Port Louis (Mauritius) are important as cable stations. In addition Port Louis has a garrison of one heavy battery and one fortress company, Royal Engineers. Flanking the Mozambique Channel, through which would pass vessels bound for the Persian Gulf, the west coast of India, and British East Africa, is Portuguese East Africa, with its two harbours of Lourenço Marques and Beira. The former is the nearest and most accessible port to Johannesburg, the Rand district, and the north-eastern half of the Transvaal; it has up-to-date plant for refuelling ships with coal and oil, and has twelve deep-water berths for ocean-going steamers. In 1934 over 400 British steamers of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million gross tons entered and cleared. Beira has not such extensive accommodation, but has deep-water wharfage for three ships, and in 1934 330 British ships of two million tons gross entered and cleared. Beira is the most convenient outlet for the Rhodesias, and is also the eastern terminus of a transcontinental railway network, traversing the Rhodesias and Angola, with its western end at Benguela.

In the hands of a potential enemy these ports would constitute a menace to British supremacy in the Indian Ocean, but belonging as they do to an allied Power they might well be of service to Great Britain in time of war.

### (c) The Air Route to the Cape

While Cecil Rhodes's dream of a Cape-to-Cairo railway has not yet been fully realized, it is now possible to fly from Alexandria

to Cape Town in a little over three days. Such a development of swift communications is of special importance in a territory so vast as Africa, where a diversity of geographic conditions has further hampered the extension of overland routes. Apart from the advantages of speedy transport for passengers and mails, the air routes have a political value inasmuch as they tend to nullify the effects of distance and make for increased personal consultation between those who administer adjacent territories. This is most desirable, if successful co-operation is to be achieved. From a strategic aspect the existence of these routes serves to provide a reserve of highly-skilled pilots, mechanics, and ground staff, and a chain of potential bases with their wireless equipment and repair shops, all of which would be valuable in time of war.

The present service is operated by Imperial Airways and its associated companies.<sup>1</sup> It proceeds, though independent of the Eastern Service, by the same route as far as Alexandria; thence it follows the course of the Nile to Khartoum, calling *en route* at Cairo, Luxor and Wadi Halfa. From Khartoum the flying-boats continue along the course of the White Nile to Kisumu on Lake Victoria, via Malakal and Port Bell (Kampala): the next stretch takes them overland to the Indian Ocean, where they come down at Mombasa. From this point onwards the Imperial Airways service follows the coastline of Africa to its terminus at Durban, by way of Dar-es-Salaam, Lindi, Mozambique, Beira, and Lourenço Marques. The mainline service to Durban leaves Southampton every Wednesday and Saturday, and on Fridays a similar service leaves for Kisumu by the same route.

Imperial Airways maintain a feeder service from Khartoum to Lagos calling at El Obeid,<sup>2</sup> Geneina, Fort Lamy,<sup>2</sup> Maiduguri<sup>2</sup> and Kano: Elders Colonial Airways have now extended this service to Accra. Wilson Airways run three branch lines from Kisumu; one to M'wanza on the southern shore of Lake Victoria and thence to Geita, and two services to Nairobi. Of these one is direct and fast, and the other is slower, but calls at Kakamega, Kitale, Eldoret, Nakuru, and Nyeri. In addition to the regular service, Wilson Airways maintain a route from Nairobi via Mombasa, Tanga and Zanzibar, to Dar-es-Salaam. Finally, there is a line from Nairobi to Broken Hill and Lusaka, via Moshi, Dodoma, M'beya, and M'pika. From Beira, the last junction on the main route, Rhodesian and Nyasaland Airways run a service to Blantyre and Salisbury, and from Blantyre via Salisbury to Bulawayo.

On the last stage of the journey, connexion between Durban

<sup>1</sup> The following are the associated companies operating in Africa: Wilson Airways; Rhodesian and Nyasaland Airways; Elders Colonial Airways.

<sup>2</sup> Only if opportunity offers and circumstances permit.

and Cape Town is maintained by South African Airways, the route going by way of East London and Port Elizabeth four times a week. Aeroplanes of the same company fly between Cape Town and Johannesburg three times a week, via Victoria West and Kimberley; and between Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg via Bloemfontein. From Kimberley this company operates a service to Windhoek via Upington and Keetmanshoop, and a daily service between Durban and Johannesburg. From the latter the route extends northwards via Pietersburg, Bulawayo and Livingstone to Lusaka, where connexion can be made with the Wilson Airways service.

The times and distances from Southampton to the principal junctions on the route to Cape Town are as follows :

Southampton to :	Distance	Time
Alexandria . . .	2,259 miles	1 day, 5 hours
Khartoum . . .	3,415 „	2 days, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ „
Kisumu. . . .	4,644 „	2 „ 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ „
Beira . . . .	6,359 „	4 „ 4 „
Durban . . . .	7,161 „	4 „ 10 „
Cape Town . . .	7,904 „	abt. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ days.

Throughout the route the use of aerodromes on foreign soil, such as those in France, Italy, Greece, Egypt and Portuguese East Africa, is regulated by Conventions concerning Aerial Navigation signed by Great Britain and the territorial Powers concerned.

## SECTION III

### THE FAR EAST ; THE AMERICAN CONTINENT

#### CHAPTER VIII

#### The Far East

##### *Introduction*

BRITISH policy in the Far East cannot be fully understood without some preliminary appreciation of the numerous factors by which it is determined. Moreover, it is exceedingly dangerous to embark upon any study of these factors without emphasizing the close and constant interdependence of events in that area with the general course of international relations in the world as a whole. The degree of British participation in Far Eastern events must necessarily be determined primarily by the state of things prevailing in Western Europe at any given time. No threat to British Far Eastern interests, however grave, can ever deflect British statesmanship from what must inevitably be its major concern, namely, the security of the British Isles and of the sea communications upon which Great Britain depends for her supplies of foodstuffs and raw materials.

This is even more true to-day than it was before the World War. Until the coming of aviation, Great Britain could conduct her policy throughout the world with the tolerable certainty that the British Isles at any rate were free from the danger of direct attack. With the development of military aviation it is no longer possible for Great Britain to exercise her influence throughout the world in the certainty that the centre of British power is secure.

The position which Great Britain built up in the Far East during the nineteenth century was won by means of sea power, and it is primarily by sea power that it is maintained. The degree to which sea power can be employed in the interests of Far Eastern policy must necessarily depend upon the demands made upon British naval strength in other parts of the globe. This will continue to be the case even if, in accordance with the declared policy of the British government, some form of 'two hemisphere standard' is achieved by the establishment of a powerful Far Eastern squadron with its base at Singapore. Though the existence of such a squadron would greatly improve Great Britain's position in the Far East, it is hardly conceivable



that it could operate effectively unless it could be substantially reinforced in a time of strained relations by contingents of the Fleet normally stationed nearer home. Whether such reinforcements could be made available would depend at any given moment upon whether an actual or potential threat in the West necessitated the maintenance at full strength of that part of the fleet which is normally stationed in the Western hemisphere.

What is true of Great Britain is true of every other Power, saving only China and Japan, which has interests in the Pacific area. Soviet Russia, though she is attempting to form her Far Eastern territories into an independent military and economic unit, must still direct her Far Eastern policy with due regard to her interests in Europe. Since neither France, the Netherlands nor Portugal is able to dispose of any considerable naval strength in the Pacific area, their importance lies principally in their economic strength for any assistance which they might be able to give to Great Britain in Europe, and to the strategic uses to which their territories might be put by a friendly Power with which they were co-operating.

The position of the United States of America is somewhat different. Since no Power directly threatens her security, she is able to concentrate a very large part of her naval strength in any part of the world where it may be required.

The weakness of Japan's position lies in her dependence upon overseas markets, her strength in the fact that her interests, and the military and naval forces whereby those interests are defended, are concentrated wholly in the Pacific area, and that foreign fleets acting against her would have to operate at a great distance from their bases. Japan can profit by the distractions which weaken the other Pacific Powers, and she is secure in the knowledge that nothing can distract her from the defence of her own interests.

This advantageous position would, of course, be endangered by the emergence of a second great Power in the Far East which enjoyed the same asset of a concentration of power and interests in that area. It is perhaps the realization of this fact which has led Japan to see in the unification and strengthening of China the greatest potential threat to her present predominance.

### *The Policy of the Western Powers before the War*

The object of nineteenth-century Western policy in the Pacific was the promotion of trade.

In the first phases of commercial relations between China and the West, Chinese conceptions of the nature of law and a settled conviction of the innate inferiority and even depravity of all

foreigners obliged foreign merchants to submit to being confined under humiliating conditions to the single port of Canton. The determination of the Western Powers, under the leadership of Great Britain, to achieve equality of treatment led to two wars in the middle of the nineteenth century, by which China was forced to agree to the establishment, for foreigners of practically all nationalities, of a general régime of treaty ports, settlements and concessions, special privileges and extra-territoriality. The pendulum swung back and now it was China who submitted to a régime of inequality which is still the background of her relations with other Powers. She continued, however, to oppose her considerable powers of passive resistance to penetration and encroachment, until her defeat in the war with Japan at the end of the nineteenth century seemed to portend her dissolution, and exposed her to a predatory scramble for concessions by the Western Powers, with the exception of the United States. The Boxer rising of 1900 halted this process and opened a new era; for, from now on, the Powers were obliged to adjust their policies to the new nationalist movement whose ambition was to modernize China's institutions and enable her to take her rightful place among the nations of the world. The opening up of China by railways and other forms of enterprise requiring foreign capital and expert assistance held out the prospect of enormous gains, and the fierce rivalries of the Powers gave rise on the one hand to claims of spheres of influence, and on the other hand to not very successful attempts to agree to share the gains between them.

The stirrings of the national consciousness that had begun in 1900 gave rise to the revolution that drove out the Manchu dynasty in 1911, but the attempt then made to set up republican institutions initiated a long period of frustration and disunity, accompanied by civil war, a deterioration in China's international status, and a revival of aggression by Japan. This was the situation that confronted the Western Powers when they emerged from the ordeal of the Great War and had time to take stock of the position in the Far East.

### *The Washington Conference*

It was not till nearly three years after the end of the War that a serious attempt was made, on American initiative, to deal with Far Eastern affairs. Japan's policy of expansion on the mainland of Asia and her attitude towards China during the Great War caused considerable anxiety to those Powers whose interests would be threatened by a Japanese hegemony of the Far East. Great Britain was, in addition, now greatly embarrassed by the fact of her alliance with Japan. As a measure of defence against the

aggressive policy of Russia the Anglo-Japanese alliance had not originally been out of harmony with the policy of the United States in regard to China. But when Japan, more aggressive than Russia had ever been, had stepped into the place of both Russia and Germany, the alliance became not only an anachronism, but a stumbling block in Great Britain's relations with China, with Canada, and with the United States. When therefore the American government in 1921 convened a conference at Washington 'on the limitation of armaments, in connexion with which Pacific and Far Eastern questions would also be discussed', Great Britain warmly welcomed a move the objects of which were to secure fair treatment for China, and, by softening the acrimony of the competition between the Powers for trade and industrial advantages in China, to remove the causes of the race in naval armaments which was in progress, and which was so distressingly like the competition that immediately preceded the war of 1914. 'China was the stake for which the game of naval competition in the Pacific was being played. In order to stop the game the stake must be removed from the table; and conversely in order to save the stake from seizure the game must be stopped.'<sup>1</sup> The success of the Conference was assured by the willingness of the United States to sacrifice her commanding lead in battleships. The Four Power Treaty of December 13, 1921, substituted for the Anglo-Japanese alliance a compact which brought together the British Empire and the United States, and included both Japan and France. These Powers mutually agreed to respect their rights in relation to their insular possessions and insular dominions in the Pacific Ocean; to hold a joint conference to consider and adjust any controversy arising between them out of any Pacific question; and to consult one another in case of danger from any other Power. By the Five Power Treaty of February 6, 1922, the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan agreed *inter alia* to a proportionate limitation of capital ships, and by Article XIX of the same Treaty the United States, the British Empire, and Japan agreed to maintain the *status quo* with regard to fortifications and naval bases in certain areas in the Pacific Ocean. The effect of these provisions was that, while Great Britain was free to enlarge the naval base at Singapore, Japan was secured against the establishment of a first-class naval base within striking distance of her main islands, by either of the other two principal naval Powers. Her defensive position in the Western Pacific was rendered absolutely impregnable by sea and she was assured of the uninterrupted security of her communications with her continental possessions and with China. On the other hand, Article XIX left

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs for 1920-3*, p. 453.

Hong Kong and the Philippines at the mercy of the Japanese navy.

It was on the foundation laid by these two instruments that the Powers were able to agree on a common policy of non-aggression towards China. By the Nine Power Treaty of February 6, 1922, Article I, the Contracting Powers other than China agreed :

‘ 1. To respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial and administrative integrity of China.

‘ 2. To provide the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity to China to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable government.

‘ 3. To use their influence for the purpose of effectually establishing and maintaining the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations throughout the territory of China.

‘ 4. To refrain from taking advantage of conditions in China in order to seek special rights or privileges which would abridge the rights of subjects or citizens of friendly states, and from countenancing action inimical to the security of such states.’

Other Articles of the Treaty provided for the Open Door, prohibition of monopolies, and the abolition of spheres of influence. It will be seen that the Treaty gave complete expression to the objectives which Anglo-American policy emphasizes in the present struggle in the Far East, and it may be said to be identical in its aims with the policy Great Britain has followed since the beginning of her treaty relations with China.<sup>1</sup>

The Japanese seizure of Manchuria in 1931-2 was the first blow struck at the edifice erected at the Washington Conference. Mr. Stimson, the United States Secretary of State, lost no time in announcing that, if one part of the structure (the Nine Power Treaty) were destroyed, there was no reason why the other parts should remain intact. This warning was not followed up, and the next step was in fact taken by Japan. The denunciation by Japan on December 29, 1934, of the Five Power Treaty of February 6, 1922, had the effect of terminating that Treaty on December 31, 1936. An attempt was made in the London Naval Conference of 1935-6 to replace it by a fresh instrument, but Japan withdrew from the Conference, and its only result was the Three Power Treaty of March 25, 1936, in which Great Britain, the United States, and France attempted to deal with the question of naval competition by measures of qualitative limitation, coupled with an escalator clause, and by publicity.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 222 below.

An attempt by Great Britain to keep alive Article XIX of the Five Power Treaty failed, and the Pacific Powers, therefore, regained their freedom of action as regards fortification and bases in the Pacific on June 1, 1937. The Three Power Treaty entered into force on July 29, 1937, but early in 1938 there were persistent and cumulative reports that Japan was building capital ships of 43,000 tons. The Japanese government were formally approached by Great Britain, the United States, and France, but refused to give any assurances on the subject. The British and United States governments accordingly felt compelled to invoke the escalator clause of the 1936 Treaty, as regards both size of ships and calibre of guns. France will take similar action only if a Power on the continent of Europe exceeds the limit of 35,000 tons laid down in the 1936 Treaty.

*The Policy of the Pacific Powers since the War*

(a) Japan

Since 1872 the population of Japan has grown from 31,000,000 to 70,000,000 and, at the present time, it continues to increase by approximately a million a year. That is to say, there is an addition of some 500,000 to the working population each year. It is probably this factor, more than any other, which makes Japanese policy 'dynamic'. The Japanese economic system is under the necessity of finding an outlet for a yearly contingent of nearly 500,000 additional wage-earners.

Four methods for absorbing this increasing population suggest themselves :

- (1) Greater production for home use.
- (2) Emigration to foreign countries.
- (3) The peaceful expansion of foreign trade.
- (4) Military expansion.

Some observers believe that it would be possible for Japan to find a solution of her economic problem by the first of these methods. But, unless substantial progress is made along this path, the choice is likely to lie between the remaining three remedies, or a combination of two or more. All the indications go, however, to show that emigration has not in the past, and is unlikely in the future, to make any substantial contribution to the solution of Japan's problems. Moreover, in proportion as Japan finds the markets of the world closed against her, and fields for emigration denied to her, she is likely to incline to the remedy of military expansion.

So long as the Japanese population continues to increase at a



substantial rate, and so long as measures designed to ensure more effective use of internal resources are deferred, the necessity for providing an outlet for the increasing population, and the fear that a fall in the standard of living may provoke and increase the dissatisfaction of the mass of the Japanese people, must continue to be determining factors in Japanese foreign policy.

A constitutional factor of the greatest importance is the position of the army and the navy in Japan, and this factor is likely to operate in the future, as it has in the past, in determining the form of Japanese expansion. The Japanese economic system and Japan's military strength have, in the opinion of many observers, outrun constitutional development. The army and navy have escaped from such degree of political control as was exercised over them. Since the Minister for War and the Minister for the Navy must be serving officers, under the direct orders of the Emperor, and since their resignation means the fall of the Cabinet, the army and navy can, in effect, exercise a veto over the actions of the government. The attack on Manchuria in 1931 is believed to have been carried out by local military leaders without the knowledge or sanction of their government. The army in Manchukuo and North China has subsequently on many occasions committed acts of aggression and faced the Tokyo governments with *faits accomplis* which were invariably accepted. In Japan itself the civil authority has not succeeded in controlling the activities of the patriotic societies, which have from time to time exercised a deciding influence upon internal affairs. Members of these societies, including many from the junior ranks of the fighting services, have not hesitated to resort to assassination in pursuit of their political ends, and their influence has consistently been used against a policy of moderation.

It is significant that, after attempting for ten years to act in accordance with the spirit of the Washington Treaties, Japan turned from reliance upon trade expansion to the method of military expansion in the autumn of 1931. The serious setback to international trade was part of the complex of causes which led Japan to turn away from peaceful economic expansion on the one hand and towards economic 'autarky' on the other. The advocates of military expansion argued that, since a foreign market and supplies of raw materials could not be assured by the normal processes of trade, they must be made secure by the extension of political domination. A further incentive, in an age in which military considerations were exercising an increasing influence, was the desire to free Japan, which had already rendered herself unassailable by sea, from dependence upon the goodwill of other nations at least for that part of her raw materials which was

necessary for her war industries. There was, moreover, the strategic incentive of improving her means of defence against Russia.

It would, however, be an over-simplification to say that a policy of military expansion had been forced on Japan by post-War developments in China or elsewhere. This policy was eagerly advocated by the patriots who, in the middle of the nineteenth century, brought Japan out of her 250 years of seclusion, and who went back for her inspiration to the ideas of Hideyoshi, the invader of Korea in the time of the Tudors. The manifest destiny of Japan was expansion on the mainland of Asia, and this meant first the seizure in 1896 of Korea, on which Russia had already laid her hands, and whose possession by a powerful enemy would mean the end of Japan as an independent nation; next the seizure of Manchuria, of which Russia, during the Boxer disorders of 1900, had actually taken possession. Japan was now in a position where she could neither go back nor stand still, but must ever go forward; for between Japanese and Russian possessions and spheres of influence in Asia south of the Amur there is no natural physical boundary, and Japanese and Russian ideologies are two incompatibles that cannot exist side by side divided only by a line on the map. The obvious direction for further advance would seem to have been Outer Mongolia and the empty spaces of Central Asia, rather than the regions south of the Great Wall with their teeming virile population. In 1935, however, the Japanese military oligarchy took the fateful decision that protection against Russia, as well as the provision of new fields for economic expansion, necessitated the severance of the provinces of North China and Inner Mongolia from the rest of China. The attempt to effect this severance has involved Japan in a life-and-death struggle with the whole of China, united and determined as never before in her history.

There has been some talk of a school, drawing support from naval as opposed to military circles, that favours expansion in the Southern Pacific rather than on the mainland of Asia. As regards the mainland of Asia, Japan is already so deeply committed that she must go forward and cannot draw back, and, while she is locked in a death struggle with China, it would hardly be possible for her to embark on a fresh aggression southwards. But if Japan should ever succeed in establishing domination over China, then further aggression southwards would become not merely a possibility but a virtual certainty, for the prize would be one of great value. In Malaya and in Netherlands India Japan would gain control of abundant supplies of rubber, tin, and oil, and in Australia there might be room for considerable numbers of immigrants.

So abundant and so valuable are the raw materials of the southern Pacific that economic expansion in this region has engaged the serious attention of Japan. The island of Formosa is regarded as an appropriate base for such a policy of expansion. In 1935 a ten-year plan for the development of the island was announced, and a sum of 200,000,000 yen was made available for this purpose ; a year later a company was formed for the exploitation of Formosa, the Japanese government furnishing the greater part of its capital of 30,000,000 yen. This company was instructed to collaborate with the company for the development of the South Sea, another semi-official organization with a capital of 29,000,000 yen. The Japanese Mandated Islands, Netherlands India, Indo-China and Siam were allotted to the second company as a field of operations. Recently a special department was set up in the Tokyo Foreign Office which was entrusted with the handling of relations with the Philippines, Netherlands India, Australia, New Zealand and Indo-China. Meanwhile, the Governor of Formosa has been put on an equal footing with the Governor-General of Korea and the 'Ambassador' to Manchukuo. It is these activities, partly economic in scope, coupled with speeches by naval officers jealous of the army's laurels, that have, at various times, given rise to fears of a policy of aggression southwards.

In Netherlands India Japanese trade has made very considerable strides, rising from 18 per cent. of total imports in 1928 to 32 per cent. in 1934.

One of the axioms of an expansionist policy is that the most appropriate moment at which to advance claims is that at which those who might be disposed to resist them have preoccupations which preclude them from doing so. Indeed, it is the possibility of exploiting the difficulties and apprehensions of the 'Haves' which constitutes the greatest diplomatic and military asset of the 'Have-nots'. At any particular moment it may be possible for the diplomacy of the 'defensive' Powers to establish in a given area a preponderance of strength which precludes the danger of aggression in that area. But, in so far as the 'defensive' Powers have interests which are distributed over various parts of the globe, their preponderant position in a given area may be endangered by diversions elsewhere which make increased demands upon their total strength.

Japan, in company with other expansionist Powers, has profited by these circumstances in order to extend her territories and win for herself a position which might otherwise have provoked the resistance of the Western Powers.

In 1814 and 1855 Japan regulated with Russia the position with regard to the Kurile Islands. On the first occasion Russia was at

war with Napoleon, on the second Japan profited by Russia's preoccupation with the Crimean War. When rivalry between Great Britain and Russia became acute at the end of the century, Japan made use of Great Britain in order to strengthen her position at the expense of Russia; she profited by the alliance with Great Britain, and from the fact that Germany was at war, in order to capture Kiao-Chao from Germany—though she was subsequently compelled to return it to China. She confronted China with the 'Twenty-one Demands'—the granting of which would otherwise have been resisted by the other 'Pacific Powers'—at a time when Europe was fully occupied with the World War. The 'Mukden Incident' which precipitated the Manchurian conflict occurred at a time when practically the whole world was in the throes of an economic crisis, and when Great Britain also was absorbed with her internal concerns. In July, 1937, when the clash occurred which precipitated the present Sino-Japanese conflict, the repercussions resulting from the Spanish Civil War and the tension prevailing in the Mediterranean, as well as German rearmament and the situation in Russia, made it tolerably certain that the Western Powers would not intervene effectively to restrain Japan.

The great military expenditure undertaken by Japan, both in the preparation of war and in its prosecution, has placed a considerable strain on the Japanese economy, and the state of economic and financial weakness in which Japan has found herself at the conclusion of her periodic conflicts has often served to rob her of the fruits of victory. Thus she was prevented by the Powers of the 'Dreibund'—Germany, France, and Russia—from enforcing to the full the terms dictated to China at Shimonoseki in 1896; similarly, at the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War Japan was so exhausted by her great military effort that she was ready to accept the mediation offered by the United States, and the relatively moderate terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth.

It is obviously impossible to offer anything more than conjecture upon the form which Japanese aspirations will take when the war is over. Assurances have never been lacking that Japan is firmly resolved to abide by treaty obligations and to respect all foreign interests. But these promises have too often been belied by subsequent events. Speaking before the Japanese Diet on January 22, 1938, Mr. Hirota, the Foreign Minister, said :

' Let me state most explicitly that, not only will Japan respect to the fullest extent the rights and interests of the Powers in the occupied areas, but she is prepared for the purpose of promoting

the welfare of the Chinese people to leave the door wide open to all Powers and to welcome their cultural and economic co-operation there.'

Even in the face of so sweeping an assurance it is impossible not to recall that many equally solemn assurances were given with regard to Manchuria. Japan, said the Japanese representative at the League, is the champion of the Open Door in Manchuria ; but the establishment of Japanese control there has been followed by the exodus of nearly all foreign interests. The history of Korea twenty years earlier was not dissimilar.

Moreover, on many occasions in the past few years, between 1931 and the outbreak of the present hostilities, the Japanese government have made statements amounting to the assertion of a Monroe Doctrine for East Asia. The most notable of these was the statement of the spokesman of the Japanese Foreign Office on April 18, 1934, known as the Amau Declaration. Mr. Amau explained that a special responsibility rests upon Japan to procure peace and stability in East Asia, that this was a responsibility that she could share with no other Power except China (a subservient China) and that other Powers were expected to adapt their attitude to this doctrine. The unification of China could only be brought about by China's own efforts. 'We oppose, therefore', he said, 'any attempt on the part of China to avail herself of the influence of any other country in order to resist Japan ; we also oppose any action taken by China calculated to play off one Power against another. Any joint operations undertaken by foreign Powers, even in the name of technical and financial assistance, at this particular moment after the Manchurian and Shanghai incidents are bound to acquire political significance. Undertakings of such nature, if carried through to the end, must give rise to complications that might eventually necessitate discussions of problems like division of China, which would be the greatest possible misfortune for China and at the same time would have most serious repercussions upon Japan and East Asia.'

'Japan, therefore, must object to such undertakings as a matter of principle, although she will not find it necessary to interfere with any foreign country negotiating individually with China on questions of finance and trade as long as such negotiations benefit China and are not detrimental to peace in East Asia.'

In short, Japan would no longer be one of a group of Powers in a collective system, as envisaged in the League Covenant or the Nine Power Treaty. She would not even be *primus inter pares*, but would be the supreme Power in the Far East. In her negotiations in recent years with China, Japan has insisted on



three demands, economic collaboration, co-operation against Communism, and cessation of anti-Japanese activities. When analysed the second of these demands has been found to involve something very like a protectorate over China, with a special régime, amounting to virtual separation, in North China. Economic collaboration has meant that Chinese nascent industries must not rival but be complementary to those of Japan, that China must submit to exploitation by Japan to the exclusion of other countries and particularly of Great Britain and America. While Great Britain desires the political and economic development of China, Japan desires neither, for the former might mean the extinction, the latter the ruin, of Japan.

(b) China

Throughout the nineteenth century the rôle of China in the Far East was almost wholly negative, owing to the fact that the Chinese reaction to the impact of Western expansionism was very different from that of Japan. The strong hold of traditionalism prevented China from imitating the methods of the Western Powers and from placing herself in a position in which she could resist their encroachments with their own weapons. Consequently China did not develop a military power strong enough to enable her to resist the demands made upon her. Unable to resist the naval power of Great Britain, France, Germany and Japan, she could protect herself only by setting her foes against one another. Moreover, the vast area of China made it difficult for the Chinese Empire to exercise an effective control over the whole territory of China and over the frontier peoples which remained in a tributary relationship to the Emperor.

China has always been recognized as a potential factor of immense importance both in the economic and in the political sphere. If the appalling poverty which is the dominant factor in present-day China were to give place to a rising standard of living, the effect upon world economy of the corresponding expansion of the Chinese market would be incalculable. A unified China under strong leadership, equipped with a modern army and backed by the vast natural resources of China, would be a factor whose importance might extend far beyond the confines of the Pacific area.

Two quotations from the then United States Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson, will illustrate the importance which he attached to the course taken by the future development of China.

‘ The future of the Far East will be very largely dominated by the future of the four hundred and fifty million people of

Chinese blood. For several centuries Eastern Asia has owed its character mainly to the peaceful traditions of this great agricultural nation. If the character of China should be revolutionized and through exploitation become militaristic and aggressive, not only Asia but the rest of the world must tremble.' <sup>1</sup>

Again, writing of the events of 1931, Mr. Stimson says :

' No one could be wise enough to foresee what would be the ultimate result of the great changes which were taking place. We could only be certain that the character of those results would powerfully influence for good or for evil the entire world. We could only foresee that the future stability and peace of every continent of the earth would be adversely affected if the hundreds of millions of hitherto industrious and peace-loving people of China should in their awakening to modern life be transformed into an aggressive Power, fired by the memories of wrongs done to them by other nations and dominated by the theories of selfish military exploitation which most of the nations of the Western world since the Great War had been endeavouring to renounce.' <sup>2</sup>

In the twentieth century the nationalist movement was an expression of the resentment against the régime of foreign privilege and of encroachment on the sovereign rights of China that had been built up by the Western Powers during the era of expansion in the nineteenth century. The period of civil war and disorder ushered in by the revolution of 1911 was also a period when nationalist demands for the abrogation of the 'unequal treaties' and the restoration of sovereign rights were becoming more and more insistent, and resentment at their continued refusal more and more bitter.

At the beginning of the third decade of the present century it was the policy of the British government to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Chinese people so far as the state of China might make this practicable, and the Powers assembled at Washington voluntarily renounced exploitation and agreed to a general policy of co-operation in assisting China in her task of political and economic rehabilitation. Unfortunately, owing to the post-War preoccupations of the Western Powers, little progress was made along either of these lines until the explosion of actual violence once more drew attention to the Far East. At length, on the establishment at Nanking, in 1928, of the present National government, China found a solution of her constitutional difficulties, and under the leadership of Great Britain substantial

<sup>1</sup> H. L. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

progress was immediately made with the liquidation of the régime of special privileges imposed on China by the unequal treaties. Three years later the military oligarchy in Japan, possibly alarmed at the rate of this progress, violently altered the policy of their government from conciliation to aggression, seized Manchuria, and have now launched a savage attack upon China herself. While China has by no means abandoned her attacks upon foreign privileges generally, her main preoccupation is Japanese aggression. She may as a result of this aggression emerge as a strong Power with an efficient army, as well as a population of 450 millions, and vast natural resources; but that she will herself become an aggressive and imperialistic Power, as Mr. Stimson suggests, does not seem at all probable.

If Japan is successful in her present conflict with China and establishes puppet governments as she has done in Manchuria, China would become for a time, at least, an unwilling instrument in the hands of Japan. In the event of China's proving successful, it is possible that the unity achieved under the pressure of invasion might not survive the lifting of that pressure. On the other hand, China may emerge as a first-class military Power, and it is certain that she would be possessed by an intense nationalism and filled with a determination to sweep away every vestige of inequality in her relations with other Powers. Concessions, settlements, and extra-territorial jurisdiction would disappear. There would probably be an attempt to recover the former dependencies of the Empire, Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Outer Mongolia. But there seems no reason to believe that China would ever actually attempt to invade and conquer foreign countries—as Mr. Stimson appears to fear. It is evident, however, that any substantial weakening of Japan and strengthening of China which brought these two Powers more near to equality would destroy the former unchallenged predominance of Japan in Eastern Asia and tend towards the establishment of a new Pacific equipoise.

In the present state of uncertainty as regards the position of China, it is not possible to do more than suggest very tentatively certain factors that may operate in the future. The process of consolidation which might have brought Chinese unity by an evolutionary development has been rudely interrupted, and only the future can show in what form China will emerge from her present ordeal.

### (c) The Soviet Union

The Japanese occupation of Manchuria in the autumn of 1931 involved a considerable weakening of the position of the Soviet

Union. Strategically, with the loss of the Chinese Eastern Railway, the only link between Russia and Vladivostok is the Trans-Siberian railway skirting the Amur and Ussuri rivers and liable to attack by an enemy in Manchuria operating on interior lines. On the other hand, the possession of an air and naval base at Vladivostok would enable Russia to strike at the principal cities in Japan, and Russian domination in Outer Mongolia and Sinkiang gives rise in Japanese minds to a fear that connexions may be established with the Communists in China, and a Communist corridor established through Inner Mongolia and North China outflanking Manchuria. If the Japanese could cross Outer Mongolia and strike at Lake Baikal the whole of eastern Siberia would be cut off from Russia. The Soviet Union, while greatly increasing its forces in this area, has endeavoured therefore to make it into a single independent economic unit by the development of food production and of a munitions industry.

Since 1931 there has been a constant succession of incidents and clashes on the Manchukuo-Soviet and Manchukuo-Outer Mongolia frontiers. Both Japan and Russia are reported to have spent large sums on fortifying their respective frontiers, and Japan has built a number of strategic railways stretching fanwise north and west. Conferences have been held for the purpose of delimiting frontiers and setting up machinery for regulating disputes, but have not led to any useful result. As regards Outer Mongolia, the Japanese appear to prefer to leave the situation fluid, and to attach great importance to securing a diplomatic foothold in Inner Mongolia.

History has shown that the factor of distance has usually operated powerfully against Russia in conducting a war on her frontiers. Since the time of Peter the Great Russia has, as a general rule, been defeated in wars fought on her frontiers, and has been successful so soon as hostilities were carried into the interior of Russia. It was the realization of this fact which led the Soviet Union, after the conquest of Manchuria by Japan, to concentrate upon the problem of its communications in the Far East and upon the attempt to increase the self-sufficiency of its possessions in Eastern Asia.

The great diplomatic and military asset of Japan *vis-à-vis* Russia lies in the fact that the Soviet Union is compelled to concentrate as much upon the West as upon the East. So long as the Soviet Union remains a single interdependent economic and military unit, Russia is liable at any time to be distracted from the defence of her Eastern interests by events in the West, and *vice versa*. With the development of a munitions industry and of independent supplies of foodstuffs, and with the transfer of the

centre of Russian heavy industry from European Russia to the Urals, this disadvantage would be overcome and the factor of distance would operate less and less to the disadvantage of Russia's military position in the Far East. Lack of information prevents any estimate of the effect of the protracted 'Soviet purge' upon the carrying out of the Russian programme in the Far Eastern area. The general impression prevailing is that Soviet military power has not been seriously impaired, though statements by Japanese military leaders suggest that the contrary impression prevails in Japan. There has been a considerable 'purge' in the railway administration.

If the present conflict with China should keep the energies and resources of Japan occupied over a period of years, it is possible that the respite which would thereby be afforded to Soviet Russia might enable her to strengthen her economic and military position in Eastern Asia, with consequent effects upon the Asiatic balance of power.

Since 1931 both Japan and Russia have been actively engaged in the fortification of the frontiers which separate them. According to General Blucher there were, on the Japanese side of the frontier, some 130,000 Japanese troops and between 110,000 and 115,000 Manchukuo troops at the beginning of 1934. The Russians for their part had organized three army groups, one, about 70,000 strong, stationed near Outer Mongolia, a second, 150,000 strong, on the Amur River frontier, and a third, some 60,000 strong, in the Maritime Province.

It was estimated that, by 1934, Japan had built 1,000 kilometres of strategic railways and 2,000 kilometres of roads in Manchuria. Meanwhile Russia had double-tracked a large part of the Trans-Siberian railway, and had built or was building a network of new strategic lines, the most important of which was the Baikal-Amur railway. According to a pamphlet issued by the Japanese War Office in March, 1936, the U.S.S.R. had spent £93,000,000 on the construction of 5,000 forts along the Soviet-Manchukuo frontier.

It seems probable that, as fortifications are pushed ahead on either side of the Soviet-Manchukuo frontier, the difficulty for either side of attacking the other will correspondingly increase. Military opinion seems agreed in saying that, at the present time, a defending force enjoys considerable advantages over an attacking force, and this advantage is increased where the defending force is entrenched in strong prepared positions.

Apart from her direct territorial interests in Eastern Asia, the Soviet government has also been pursuing a policy of penetration in Sinkiang and has established a virtual protectorate over the



former Chinese dependency of Outer Mongolia, which has been constituted as a 'People's Republic' with institutions strongly resembling those of Soviet Russia itself. On March 12, 1936, a mutual assistance agreement was concluded between the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic, providing that each signatory should give military assistance to the other in the event of its being attacked by a third Power.

(d) The United States of America

The main object of the United States policy in the Far East has been to maintain the Open Door in China. Furthermore, the United States is concerned to afford protection to American nationals; to protect American investments, and to promote American commerce. Until the Philippine Islands have been granted complete independence, the United States, like Great Britain, has a territorial stake in the Western Pacific. The United States, like Great Britain, has important air routes in the Pacific and to these she seems to be attaching increasing importance.

Apart from the purely material interests of the United States in the Pacific, American thought and action during the post-War period have been influenced also by the general American policy of the outlawry of war and by the desire to bring order and justice into international relations.

American thought on questions affecting China has also been profoundly affected by the interest which the American people have shown in the activities of their missionaries in China, both as evangelists of the Christian faith and as apostles of American culture. American missionary and philanthropic activities in China represent, as a writer in *Foreign Affairs* somewhat quaintly expresses it, 'a capital investment of some \$40,000,000'.<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Stimson has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> the interest which this missionary and philanthropic activity has evoked throughout the length and breadth of the United States has the effect that American opinion follows with a peculiar interest and sympathy the attempt of the Chinese people to achieve national unity and economic progress.<sup>3</sup>

Pre-War American policy towards China was dictated by hostility to the scramble for concessions and the attempts by the Powers to establish 'spheres of influence' in China. The policy of the United States Administration was defined as follows in 1899 by Secretary John Hay :

<sup>1</sup> 'Alternative American Policies in the Far East,' *Foreign Affairs*, April 1938.

<sup>2</sup> H. L. Stimson, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

‘ The policy of the government of the United States is to seek a solution which may bring about permanent safety and peace to China, preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity, protect all rights guaranteed to friendly powers by treaty and international law, and safeguard for the world the principle of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire.’ <sup>1</sup>

The same policy found expression in the Washington Nine Power Treaty of 1922, in the negotiation of which the United States of America took the leading part.

It is not sufficient, however, to define the objects of United States policy in the Pacific. If the United States is to be correctly estimated as a factor in the affairs of the Far East, it is necessary to decide also whether the American people is prepared to pay the price which alone can ensure the success of their government’s policy. The American public has this in common with the British, that it often perceives the ultimate objectives of policy more clearly than the price which it is necessary to pay in order to attain them.

Thus the ‘ ideal state of affairs ’ for the United States can easily be determined ; but it can be attained only if the Administration is able to collaborate with other States, or alternatively to initiate single-handed a policy designed to achieve it, despite the fact that that policy involves certain definite risks and certain considerable sacrifices.

The United States can protect her citizens in the Far East only if she is prepared to maintain diplomatic representatives in the area in question and to despatch American warships when necessary. Such measures cannot be taken without the danger of such incidents as the bombing of the gunboat *Panay* or the insults offered to a member of the American Embassy at Nanking.

The United States Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull, made clear the attitude of the United States Administration to the question of the protection of American citizens in his broadcast address before the National Press Club on March 17, 1938 :

‘ In announcing our intention to afford appropriate and reasonable protection to our rights and interests in the Far East I stated clearly that we are fully determined to avoid the extremes either of internationalism or of isolationism. Internationalism would mean undesirable political involvements ; isolationism would either compel us to confine all activities of our people within our own frontiers with incalculable injury

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. L. Stimson, *op. cit.* p. 167.

to the standard of living and the general welfare of our people or else expose our nationals and our legitimate interests abroad to injustice or outrage wherever lawless conditions arise. Steering a sound middle course between these two extremes we are convinced that a policy of affording appropriate protection—under the rule of reason in such form as may be best suited to the particular circumstances and in accordance with the principles we advocate—is imperatively needed to serve our national interest.'

Since the outbreak of the present conflict, certain circles in America have represented the American position in the western Pacific in terms of a mathematical formula. Commercially, it is argued, America has only a slight interest in that area. In order to maintain the position of the United States, it is necessary to expend very considerable sums on defence, sums which could otherwise be saved. On balance, so the argument runs, America would actually be better off if it were possible to liquidate the American stake in China. Even the missionary societies would be able to pursue their activities to better purpose if they were not under the protection of an alien Power. Despite the constantly repeated claim that China represents a potential market of immense importance to American trade and American investment, Japan remains to-day, as she was at the beginning of the century, of considerably greater importance to the United States than China. The policy of intervening against Japan on behalf of China is therefore fundamentally unsound.

The position, from the economic point of view, has been summarized as follows by the author of a pamphlet published by the American Council of the Institute of Pacific Relations :

' . . . The overwhelming preponderance of Japan in our trade with the Far East is a fact not always adequately realized. Forty-two per cent. of our entire Far Eastern trade is carried on with Japan. More than 8 per cent. of all United States exports go to Japan, and likewise a little over 8 per cent. of all our imports are derived from that country. Japan is now our third best foreign customer—exceeded only by Canada and Great Britain. (These figures are based on average values for the years 1931-5.)

' By comparison, China, the reputed El Dorado of commerce, makes but a poor showing, accounting for only 18 per cent. of our entire Far Eastern trade, and slightly more than 3 per cent. of total imports and exports, respectively. (This includes Hong Kong and Kwantung.) Moreover, China's share in our

total trade has shown little change since the World War, and in the last few years has actually declined, while that of Japan has notably increased.' <sup>1</sup>

American trade with the Philippines is only slightly less important than trade with China, since America's trade with the Islands amounts to 19 per cent. of her total Far Eastern trade. Two per cent. of the United States' exports are taken by the Philippines, whilst 5 per cent. of her imports are derived from them. It should not be forgotten, however, that this is due in large measure to the fact that the Philippine Islands have hitherto been within the United States tariff, and that this will cease to be the case when the Islands have been given their independence.

With regard to the rest of the Pacific, the Report continues as follows :

' Continuing down the list of Far Eastern countries, we may for the moment lump together those remaining—British Malaya, Netherlands India, French Indo-China, Siam, Asiatic Russia, and the miscellaneous category of "Other Asia". Taken together, these countries absorb less than one per cent. of our exports. Their present importance as markets is therefore negligible. But on the import side, they loom up with considerable significance, furnishing more than 7 per cent. of all our imports. Tin and rubber from British Malaya and Netherlands India largely account for the comparatively substantial share of these countries in the United States import trade.' <sup>2</sup>

It is very much more difficult to pronounce categorically upon the amount of American investments in the Far East. Every estimate must, of necessity, be to some extent guesswork. One such estimate is afforded by the authority quoted above :

' In round figures, the sum of all American investments in Far Eastern countries may be put at not more than 800 million dollars. That is an outside figure ; 750 million is probably nearer the truth. This includes the property of Americans residing abroad as well as of those living in this country. Since 1930, the sum has declined by perhaps 300 million dollars, which is partly a depression and hence presumably a temporary phenomenon, but partly the result of Eastern countries—especially Japan, Netherlands India, and the Philippines—having either paid off or brought back their own securities held by American nationals.

' As between China, Japan, and the Philippines the division

<sup>1</sup> *America's Stake in the Far East*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

is nearly equal : about 225 million each in Japan and the Philippines and about 200 million in China. Investments in Netherlands India are estimated roughly at 100 million, and those in British Malaya, French Indo-China, and Siam together, at around 20 million. The balance of 30 million, making up our outside figure of 800 million in all, consists of bank capital for which we do not know the allocation among the different countries.' <sup>1</sup>

According to this calculation, the total sum of American investments in the Far East amounts to between 5 and 6 per cent. of United States' foreign investments.

It would serve no useful purpose to attempt to compute the saving on naval and military expenditure which could be effected by the United States Administration if it were to disinterest itself in the western Pacific. It is clear that a considerable amount of the military and naval expenditure is devoted to the defence of that area ; the present naval expansion scheme, upon which 1,100 million dollars were to be spent, has been made necessary by the determination of the Administration to maintain the 5 : 5 : 3 naval ratio. This expenditure was in addition to the normal naval appropriation which, for 1938-9, amounted to over 500 million dollars <sup>2</sup>.

The Secretary of State has made it clear, however, that American policy with regard to the Far East is not to be determined simply in terms of such mathematical calculations. In the address already quoted he defined the position as follows :

' To waive rights and to permit interests to lapse in the face of their actual or threatened violation—and thereby abandon obligations—in any important area of the world can serve only to encourage disregard of law and of the basic principles of international order and thus contribute to the inevitable spread of international anarchy throughout the world. For this country, as for any country, to act in such manner anywhere would be to invite disregard and violation of its rights and interests everywhere by every nation so inclined large or small.' <sup>3</sup>

The effect of the arrangements concluded at Washington in 1922 was to make it impossible for any country to take effective military action against Japan in the western Pacific.<sup>4</sup> The Five Power Treaty of 1922, however, which established the *status quo*

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> This expenditure may, of course, be due in part to the desire of the Administration to remedy unemployment by the provision of public works.

<sup>3</sup> Broadcast address before the National Press Club, March 17, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 190 above.



area, terminated on December 31, 1936. The naval policy since adopted by the United States Administration and the development of naval and air bases can be explained only as meaning that the Administration is anxious to create the physical conditions in which the United States can play an effective part in the Far East. To this extent the position has been fundamentally altered since the Manchurian crisis of 1931.

Further than this it is impossible to speak with any degree of certainty. The pronouncements of the Administration have made it clear that the widespread isolationist feeling in America is not shared by President Roosevelt or Mr. Cordell Hull. There is no likelihood of an American 'withdrawal' from the Far East. There is an evident desire to work for the rule of law and orderly development. There is a rejection of 'commitments'. There is a determination to place the United States of America in a state of military preparedness. But to say any more than this would be to embark upon conjecture.

### *The Philippine Islands and United States Far Eastern Policy*

Until 1935, when Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act, providing for the eventual independence of the Philippines, this group of islands constituted the most important territorial stake of the United States in the western Pacific. Their retention made the adoption of a positive policy by the United States in that area more probable. It was, indeed, this consideration which prompted a large section of American opinion to advocate Philippine independence. This section of opinion, which sponsored an insistent demand from the Filipinos themselves, also received support from the sugar interests, which wished to free the Cuban sugar plantations from Philippine competition.

Until the Tydings-McDuffie Bill became law, the islands were inside the United States tariff wall, and something like two-thirds of their external trade was with the United States. By the year 1960 Filipino goods will be subject to the same duties as other foreign goods on entry into the States. It is anticipated that this will have a very serious effect upon the economy of the islands, since they will thereby be deprived of a market which formerly accepted so large a proportion of Philippine exports. The difficulty of finding alternative outlets is increased by the fact that costs of production in the Philippines tend to be considerably higher than those of the Netherlands India and of the other producers with which Philippine exporters have to compete. Thus it is very possible that the new State may find itself compelled to face grave economic issues which may well have social repercussions of a serious nature.

## THE FAR EAST

The Japanese island of Formosa is only 65 miles from the northernmost island of the group, and the possibility cannot be ruled out that, in the event of trouble in the Philippines, Japan might claim the right to intervene to maintain order. Indeed, Japanese spokesmen have made no secret of their belief that such intervention might become necessary.

The Philippines are important producers of hemp, copra, coconut oil and, above all, sugar. They have considerable areas of potential agricultural land at present not under cultivation. Their supplies of timber might prove of considerable value. There are valuable deposits of iron ore, chromite, manganese and gold. It is believed by some experts that the islands might be able to absorb a large number of Japanese immigrants.

For all these reasons the Philippines might prove tempting to Japanese expansionists of the 'southern' school; especially if control of them strengthened Japan's strategic position by bringing her nearer to Netherlands India, Malaya and Borneo<sup>1</sup>.

Although the United States government has made arrangements for the building up of an army for the defence of the islands, it is scarcely likely that the Philippine government would be in a position to equip a force of sufficient strength and efficiency to resist Japanese aggression.

It is not, as yet, clear whether the United States will continue to maintain a naval base in the Philippines if and when they attain independence in 1945. The Tydings-McDuffie Act contemplates the negotiation of an international agreement for the permanent neutralization of the islands. Such a policy would doubtless secure the support of Great Britain, France and the Netherlands, since the Philippines, in the hands of a hostile Power, would involve a serious menace to French Indo-China and to the trade routes leading to Hong Kong and Shanghai.

### *British Interests*

Great Britain is interested in the Far East territorially, in respect of Hong Kong, Malaya, Borneo and the South Sea Islands (now becoming important in connexion with air routes), and commercially and financially in respect of her trade with, and investments in, China, Japan and British Far Eastern dependencies. Great Britain is further interested in the Far East in so far as developments there affect the defence of India, Australia and New Zealand, and have repercussions upon the balance of power in the world at large and, indirectly, in the European continent.

It would therefore be erroneous to suggest that the British stake is to be assessed in terms of pounds, shillings and pence,

<sup>1</sup> In March, 1939, the Japanese annexed the Spratley Islands.

for the interest of Great Britain in the Far East can be determined only by an analysis of far wider issues. It is nevertheless appropriate that some picture should be given of the extent of Great Britain's material stake in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia.

In 1936 British exports to China were valued at £6.5 million, whilst her imports from China were valued at £3.8 million. Thus her total trade with China amounted to £10.3 million. Trade with China represented 1.5 per cent. of total British exports and 0.45 per cent. of total British imports. Sixty per cent. of this trade passed through Shanghai.

Partly owing to the lack of any generally accepted definition of the term 'investment', the extent of British investments in China is more difficult to estimate. In January, 1931, Professor C. F. Remer<sup>1</sup> put the figure at about £250 million.

The share of British shipping in the China trade represents a most important invisible export; 35.7 per cent. of China's foreign trade and 41.3 per cent. of her domestic trade is carried in British bottoms.

British investment in Japan has been less extensive than in China, the figure recently given being £53 million, of which the greater part is in government or municipal securities. In 1937 only 1.2 per cent. of British imports came from Japan. In 1937 Great Britain sent 0.9 per cent. of her exports to Japan.

The trade of Japan with other British countries is more important, the total trade of Japan with the British Empire representing one-fifth of Japan's foreign trade. Imports from India, mostly of raw cotton, and from Australia, raw wool, represent 9 and 5 per cent. of Japanese imports respectively, whilst India takes 8 per cent. of Japanese exports.

Politically and commercially, Hong Kong is of the very greatest importance to Great Britain. In the political sphere, British prestige in the Far East rests in large measure on the possession of the island and of the adjacent territory on the mainland. Commercially, Hong Kong gives to the British Empire a *pied-à-terre* from which to participate in the economic development of the Chinese hinterland. Until the outbreak of the present conflict it seemed that a period of rapid expansion in southern China was to be expected, and that that area would afford an important market for the importation of capital goods. Hong Kong provides an *entrepôt* for shipping and trade as well as being a centre for banking and insurance activities; though it has in recent years been losing importance relatively to Shanghai, it remains a very considerable economic asset. This is clear from the trade figures of the Colony

<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Investments in China*, New York, 1933.

which in 1936, imported goods to the value of £28·5 million and exported goods to the value of £22·1 million.<sup>1</sup>

According to Professor Remer<sup>2</sup> British investments in Hong Kong amounted in 1929 to between £18·5 and £35 million. This would represent between 0·5 per cent. and 1·0 per cent. of total British overseas investments. But it should not be forgotten that the value of Hong Kong depends on the maintenance of friendly relations with the authorities of the adjacent Chinese provinces, and that if these fell under the control of a régime whose policy was actively hostile to British trade, Hong Kong might become economically valueless. The Japanese capture of Canton and invasion of the surrounding territories have already produced a sharp fall of values in Hong Kong.

Direct British business investments in the International Settlement at Shanghai were estimated by Professor Remer to amount to £157 millions. The Settlement is the hub of the greatest trading, financial and industrial centre in China, and its Municipal Council and Administration are predominantly British as regards both character and higher personnel. The British government is not directly responsible for the special régime set up in the International Settlement, but has from time to time assumed the chief responsibility for its protection in time of disorder.

Since the Great War there has been a serious decline in British trade with China. This is due partly to the diminution from various causes of Chinese purchasing power, partly to a decline in world trade, and partly to a rise of native industry in China, causing a change in demand from consumable goods (such as piece goods) to food and raw materials and capital goods. Great Britain cannot supply either food or raw materials. She is, however, well able to supply capital goods and the finance required for Chinese economic development generally. The Leith Ross Mission and other measures adopted by His Majesty's Government indicate that Great Britain is determined to secure her participation in the Chinese market of the future, and that she has no intention of retreating from the position built up in previous generations in the Far East.

In the economic field, British Malaya is important as a source of primary products, since British Malaya furnishes over 40 per cent. of the world production of tin and rubber, 11 per cent. of the world production of copra, 9 per cent. of tungsten, and 1 per cent. of iron ore. Thus, together with Netherlands India, which is the sixth largest producer of crude oil, Great Britain's dependencies in the southern Pacific might offer a tempting bait to an

<sup>1</sup> These figures represent, of course, almost entirely *entrepôt* trade.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*

ambitious Power which felt itself handicapped by a shortage of raw materials.

Apart from their purely economic value, the British dependencies in the southern Pacific have a considerable actual and potential value as air bases. The fact that these territories are under British control and that Netherlands India and Indo-China are in the hands of friendly Powers<sup>1</sup> provides a safeguard of the trade routes to Australasia. Any encroachment by a great Power in that area would represent a grave threat to British imperial communications, as would any development which made the Chinese island of Hainan a possible base for attack upon British, French, Dutch or Portuguese possessions in the southern Pacific. Despite official Japanese denials it has been suggested that one of the objects of the Japanese in the present conflict is to place Hainan under Japanese sovereignty. This would involve a potential threat to British communications with Hong Kong and Shanghai, as also to French Indo-China and to the Philippines, and would give Japan an important strategic asset in the southern Pacific.

Now that the establishment of direct air communications between Australasia and the American continent is being contemplated, the British Empire is interested to ensure British participation in such a system of air services.

The existence of a common frontier between China and Burma, over which China formerly claimed suzerainty, represents a further British interest in this area. The Chinese government, in view of the present threat to their sources of supply from the eastern seaboard, has constructed a road towards Burma in order to furnish itself with an alternative route of supply. Since the fall of Canton, this may well become the only route of supply, and the road, whether it will always be usable or not, at present stretches from Rangoon to the new headquarters of the Chinese government at Chungking, a distance of 2,000 miles.<sup>2</sup>

### *British Forces*

The problem of Imperial Defence in the Far Eastern area obviously cannot be considered in isolation. The extent to which Great Britain can allot units of her armed forces to the Far East is dependent upon the general political grouping at any given moment.

The British forces stationed in the Far East have varied considerably in the last year or so according to the exigencies arising out of the Sino-Japanese conflict.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the Philippines, see pp. 208-9 above.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times*, January 14, 1939.

<sup>3</sup> The details available are given in the section on Imperial Defence, pp. 243-95 below.



The primary object of the garrisons in China is the protection of British lives and property in time of civil disorder, as well as the combating of piracy. Under the terms of the '*status quo* area' arrangements concluded at Washington in 1922 the fortifications of Hong Kong might not be strengthened, and, as a result, the British Empire was without a naval base east of Malta capable of refitting capital ships.

The naval base of Hong Kong, the headquarters of the China station, is an island, eleven miles long and from two to five miles broad, at the mouth of the Canton river. The Colony includes Kowloon, on the mainland, and beyond Kowloon, an area known as the New Territory, which was leased from China for ninety-nine years in 1898. The population of 840,000 includes 820,000 Chinese.

The island of Hong Kong is close to the mainland ; the harbour is one of the finest in the world, and the entrances are narrow. The land frontier of the New Territory was selected in order to minimize the danger of attack from the land side. As a naval base for major operations, its value is diminished by the comparative proximity of first-class Japanese bases about 1,200 miles away and of second-class Japanese bases in Formosa and the Pescadores only 400 miles away ; and by the fact also that its communications with Singapore, 1,450 miles to the south, run through a region where Japanese naval power at present predominates.

The dock accommodation in the island and in Kowloon (the Whampoa Docks), is good, though not suitable for post-Jutland capital ships. There is cable communication with Singapore, and a wireless telegraph service which can communicate direct with that port also.

As regards external attack, Hong Kong lies at the end of the British lines of communication, comparatively close to Japanese bases or potential bases and remote from other British bases. It might, therefore, be subject to any of the following, either singly or in combination : (i) air attack on the harbour by aircraft from carriers or from Formosa or the Pescadores ; (ii) naval operations against its lines of communication with Singapore ; (iii) attack on the land side preceded by a landing at some convenient bay in Chinese territory nearby.

The fact that the Hong Kong base, lying within the '*status quo* area', could not be extended in order to provide facilities for the repair of capital ships of the post-Jutland type was early recognized as having important consequences for the strategic position of Great Britain in the Far East. These considerations led to work being started on the Singapore base in 1923. After various

interruptions, the King George V graving dock was opened at Singapore on February 11, 1938, thereby indicating the conclusion of the most important part of the plan.<sup>1</sup>

### *British Policy*

The political preponderance which Great Britain enjoyed in the Pacific during the nineteenth century was built up by sea-power. The command of the seas provided Great Britain with a mobile weapon wherewith she could bring pressure upon China by operating against the coast towns and on the Yangtze. Furthermore, it strengthened Great Britain as against her Western competitors, since she was able to dispose of a very much greater naval squadron in the Pacific than any other Western Power.

The first serious blow at the British Far Eastern hegemony was the construction, in the final decade of the nineteenth century, of the Trans-Siberian railway. Of this event Mr. G. F. Hudson writes as follows :

‘ The building of the Trans-Siberian railway was a political event of great importance. It profoundly affected the relations of the Great Powers in Europe. In the first place, it enabled Russia to escape as regards her Far Eastern policy from the ultimate domination to which she, along with the other European Continental Powers, was subjected by reason of England’s paramount sea-power. From the year of the battle of Trafalgar the naval supremacy of England in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean was not seriously challenged, and it was the ultimate arbiter in conflicts arising out of the overseas colonial policies of the other European nations. Russia alone, having direct entry into Asia by land, had the capacity for evading this supremacy, but until the building of the Trans-Siberian railway her advantage was merely potential.

‘ . . . Russia’s primary means of communication with her Far Eastern territories were by sea, and in so far as she was dependent on maritime transport she was subject to English sea-power just as much as France or Germany. This situation was altered when the vast spaces of Russia-in-Asia began to be contracted by railways. First the Trans-Caspian, which skirted the frontier of Persia and filled British statesmen with “ nervousness ” for the safety of the Indian empire, and then the Trans-Siberian, which aimed at the shore of the Pacific in close proximity to China, Korea, and Japan.’ <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The significance of this base from the point of view of Imperial Defence is dealt with on p. 252 below.

<sup>2</sup> G. F. Hudson, *The Far East in World Politics*, pp. 71-2.

With the completion of the railway, Far Eastern affairs became for Great Britain an element in what Prince Bülow described as 'the great Anglo-Russian rivalry'. Indeed, it became so important an element—and the point is significant—that it was among the most important causes of the desertion by Great Britain of the policy of 'splendid isolation'.

Russia saw in Manchuria an appropriate sphere for her activities. Given Russian control of Manchuria, it would be possible for the Czar's government to exercise a dominant control over Peking, the seat of the Chinese government. Russia had the diplomatic support of her two associates of the Asiatic *Dreibund*, Germany and France. The threat to British interests was described thus by Joseph Chamberlain :

'It is not a question of a single province, it is a question of the whole fate of the Chinese Empire, and our interests in China are so great, our proportion of the trade is so enormous, and the potentialities of that trade so gigantic that I feel that no more vital question has ever been presented for the decision of a Government and the decision of a nation.'<sup>1</sup>

It was the military and political threat to these interests in China which led Great Britain, toward the end of the final decade of the nineteenth century, to consider securing a military ally against Russia, and the thoughts of Joseph Chamberlain turned towards Germany. In a speech delivered at Birmingham on May 13, 1898, he referred to the possibility of such an alliance, alluding specifically to the need of protecting British interests in China. When nothing came of the tentative moves for an Anglo-German alliance, Great Britain turned to Japan, and the Anglo-Japanese alliance was concluded on January 30, 1902. Under the terms of the alliance each party bound itself to observe benevolent neutrality in the event of the other finding itself at war with a single Power, and to active intervention in support of its ally in the event of that ally being attacked by more than one Power. The fact that Great Britain was prepared to depart from her traditional policy to the extent of accepting so definite a commitment was a proof of the importance which Great Britain attached to the maintenance of her position in the Far East.

The Anglo-Japanese alliance, brought into being by the menace of Russian hegemony in the Far East, survived, when the Russo-Japanese War had been followed by a period of collaboration between Russia and Japan, as a part of the general system of arrangements between Great Britain, France, Russia and Japan.

<sup>1</sup> Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

Thanks to that alliance, Great Britain was able to count on Japanese support in the Pacific during the Great War.

With the conclusion of the World War a number of new factors became operative in the Far East. Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian friction made it difficult for Great Britain to maintain the alliance with Japan without the danger of prejudicing relations with the United States and Canada. Japanese aggressive intentions in China, as revealed by the Twenty-One Demands, were inimical to British interests. The danger of a naval building race rendered the conclusion of a measure of naval arms limitation desirable; there was a general desire to remove the cause of conflict inherent in the system of spheres of influence in China; there was a general desire to give to China the opportunity of peaceful development; there was the desire to devise for the Far Eastern area specific arrangements designed to give particular effect to the spirit of international collaboration which had found general expression in the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The objects of the Washington Conference were made clear by Lord Balfour, Chairman of the British Delegation, in a statement in the course of the Conference

‘The British Empire Delegation understood that there was no representative of any Power around the table who thought that the old practice of “spheres of interest” was either advocated by any government or would be tolerable to this conference. So far as the British government were concerned, they had, in the most formal manner, publicly announced that they regarded this practice as utterly inappropriate to the existing situation.’

The Washington Conference revealed a fundamental identity between the Far Eastern policies of Great Britain and the United States of America. Indeed, the classical definition of American policy in respect of China by John Hay<sup>1</sup> might equally well have served as a declaration of British policy at the Conference.

It is unnecessary to describe in detail the provisions of the agreements reached at Washington, to which allusion has already been made.<sup>2</sup> Both the similarity and the points of difference between the Nine Power Treaty and Article X of the Covenant of the League should, however, be borne in mind, for they illustrate very clearly the main trend of British Far Eastern policy on the morrow of the Great War.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 203 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 192 above.

Under Article X of the League Covenant the Members of the League :

‘ Undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League.’

The signatories of the Nine Power Treaty other than China—one of whom, the United States of America, was not a League Member—agreed :

‘ To respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial and administrative integrity of China.’

The similarity of phrase between the two undertakings indicates that both were prompted by the desire to attain the same objective—the latter in the particular case of China. But, whereas the former involved a positive obligation to ‘ preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence ’ of League Members, the latter goes no farther than a simple act of renunciation—indeed, except in so far as the United States, a non-Member of the League, adhered to the treaty, it implied a weakening, rather than a strengthening, of the general obligation in respect of China. The League Covenant provided China at least with an embryonic sanction for her support against a reversion to the pre-War policy of exploitation. The Nine Power Treaty was nothing more than a self-denying ordinance, a precursor in a particular sphere of the Briand-Kellogg Pact.

Nor is this all. The complex of treaties concluded at Washington actually created a position in which it was impossible for Great Britain and the United States to place any form of military power behind the guarantee of the integrity of China.

The failure of the Washington Powers after the signature of the Treaties to take any more effective steps to meet Chinese aspirations in regard to the unequal treaties caused bitter resentment, which presently, under Soviet inspiration, was canalized and directed against Great Britain, the chief architect and upholder of the treaty system. The dangerous situation that then developed, and the serious damage inflicted on British interests, caused Great Britain to reconsider the bases of her Far Eastern policy. It was seen that the wisest method of treating the nationalist movement was to render it innocuous by implementing the promises that had been freely made on paper during the previous twenty-five years. This new orientation of British policy was announced in



December, 1926, in a document which came to be known as the December Memorandum. In this Great Britain suggested to the Washington Powers that the idea that the economic and political development of China could only be secured under foreign tutelage should be abandoned, and that some immediate measure of satisfaction should be given to China in respect of her claim to treaty revision without insisting on the prior establishment of a strong central government. This condition had hitherto meant an indefinite postponement of action, but Great Britain now took immediate steps to implement in a number of ways the policy of the Memorandum. The leased territory of Weihaiwei and the British concessions at Hankow, Kuakiang, Chin Kiang, and Amoy were returned to Chinese administration, and the constitution of the concession at Tientsin was reformed so as to place British and Chinese upon an equal footing in the administration ; privileges formerly claimed in connexion with missionaries, persons of dual nationality, and the trial of suits in Chinese courts were abandoned ; the Boxer indemnity was returned to China ; a tariff autonomy treaty was signed in December, 1928, and British influence secured the freeing of customs revenues from foreign control, the admission of Chinese representation on the Council of the International Settlement at Shanghai, and the return of the Chinese courts in the Settlement to Chinese control. The new policy, which was quickly justified by its results, had been adopted at a fortunate moment, for the triumph of the nationalist cause in China led soon after to the establishment at Nanking of the present National government.

A new phase, however, was opened by the Japanese aggression in Manchuria in 1931. The complexities of the Manchurian dispute were extensive and peculiar. The only possible method of dealing with it was by conciliation and mediation, and when these failed the League had to confess to failure and to accept all the consequences of failure. The United States, who showed throughout a strong desire to co-operate with the League, did not consider that coercion in any form should be applied, and the League Powers principally interested in the Far East shared the view that this was not a case in which sanctions either could or should be applied. In the circumstances, Great Britain's policy was to support to the fullest extent of her influence the moral authority of the League, and in view of her special relations with the United States, to harmonize and co-ordinate the action of the League and America.

On January 7, 1932, the United States government addressed a note to both China and Japan stating that ' it does not intend to recognize any situation, treaty, or agreement, which may be

brought about by means contrary to the covenants and obligations of the Pact of Paris of August 27, 1928, to which treaty both China and Japan, as well as the United States, are parties'. This was the first enunciation of the Non-Recognition doctrine which Mr. Stimson believed might prove a substitute for sanctions. The British government were not able to separate themselves from their fellow Members of the League, and join in sending a similar note, but in a speech before the League Assembly on March 7, 1932, Sir John Simon proposed the acceptance of the Non-Recognition doctrine and its proclamation as one of the principles of the League, and in the Assembly Resolution of March 11, 1932, this proposal was carried into effect. The United States government expressed their gratification at this action, and in a speech which he delivered on August 8, 1932, in New York to the Council on Foreign Relations, Mr. Stimson said :

' The American government formally notified both Japan and China on the 7th January, 1932, that it would not recognize any situation, treaty, or agreement which might be brought about by means contrary to the covenants and obligations of the Pact of Paris. Subsequently, on the 11th March, this action of the American Government was endorsed by the Assembly of the League of Nations at a meeting at which 50 nations were represented. On that occasion, under circumstances of the utmost formality and solemnity, a resolution was adopted unanimously, Japan alone refraining from voting, in which the Assembly declared that " it is incumbent upon the members of the League of Nations not to recognize any situation, treaty, or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the Covenant of the League of Nations or to the Pact of Paris . . . ". When the American government took the responsibility of sending its Note on 7th January last, it was a pioneer. It was appealing to a new common sentiment, and to provisions of a treaty as yet untested. Its own refusal to recognize the fruits of aggression might be of comparatively little moment to an aggressor, but when the entire group of civilized nations took their stand beside the position of the American Government, the situation was revealed in its true sense. Moral disapproval, when it becomes the disapproval of the whole world, takes on a significance hitherto unknown in International Law, for never before has international opinion been so organized and mobilized.'

The conciliatory action of the League having ended in February, 1933 in failure, the States Members of the League

could only fall back on Non-Recognition. But this also, contrary to Mr. Stimson's expectations, was found in practice to be completely ineffective. Nevertheless, in Great Britain's view, if Japan could be persuaded to commit no further aggression south of the Great Wall, and if China would consent tacitly to leave the question of Manchuria for the time being in cold storage, there was a possibility that harmonious relations between the two countries might be restored, that the tension of the past few years might be replaced by a general *détente* in the Far East, with beneficial effects (e.g. as regards naval disarmament) throughout the world, and that international co-operation (including that of China herself) might be organized for the economic development of China in accordance with the principles of the Nine Power Treaty and the policy of the December Memorandum. To bring this about now became the general aim of British policy in the Far East.

The Amau declaration of 1934<sup>1</sup> was met with a firm rejoinder that the obligations of consultation and co-operation were still binding on the parties to the Nine Power Treaty, and that no veto could be imposed on the legitimate activities of British nationals in China. The currency difficulties in which China about this time became involved seemed to offer an opportunity for bringing China and Japan together in a general scheme of international co-operation. Sir Frederick Leith Ross, chief Economic Adviser to His Majesty's Government, was sent to the Far East in 1935 with this object in view, but, though the Mission was productive of results of very great value for China as well as for British interests, it proved impossible to eradicate Japanese suspicion that help rendered to China by anyone but Japan could only be for the purpose and have the effect of strengthening China in her determination and ability to resist Japan. In the circumstances Great Britain had no option but to continue single-handed her efforts to promote and guide on the right lines the economic recovery that seemed now to be well under way in China, and to continue to maintain a friendly and sympathetic attitude towards Chinese administrative and constitutional development.

The hope of securing a general *détente* in the Far East was not, however, abandoned, and conversations with the Japanese Ambassador in London with that end in view were actually in progress when hostilities between China and Japan broke out once more in the summer of 1937. The state of Europe at that time rendered it impossible for either the League collectively, or any League Power, effectively to intervene. When China eventually appealed to the League, the matter was referred to the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 197 above.

Advisory Committee set up by the Assembly on February 24, 1933. The Committee, in a resolution proposed by the British representative, condemned the bombing of open towns in China and in a further resolution of October 6 (the day after President Roosevelt's Chicago speech recommending the placing of aggressors in quarantine) proposed 'that Members of the League should refrain from taking any action that might have the effect of weakening China's power of resistance, and should consider how far individually they can extend aid to China', and that the dispute should be referred to a conference of the signatories of the Nine Power Treaty in order to seek a method of putting an end to the conflict by agreement. In a speech in the House of Commons on November 1, Mr. Eden said that nothing effective could be done in the Far East without the United States, and that in order to secure her co-operation he would, if necessary, go from Melbourne to Alaska; His Majesty's Government would neither rush ahead of the United States, nor lag behind.

In the event, however, the Treaty Powers found themselves as powerless to act as the League itself, and the Brussels Conference ended in complete failure. It met on November 3, and adjourned *sine die* on November 24, after adopting a declaration maintaining that force could provide no just or lasting solution for disputes, upholding the validity of the Nine Power Treaty and strongly urging suspension of hostilities. Japan refused an invitation to attend the Conference.

No constructive policy would appear to be possible until some prospect of peace appears above the horizon. Great Britain has kept in close touch with France and the United States, and the diplomatic exchanges arising out of the war have clearly reflected the parallel lines of policy of the three Powers. The American protest of October<sup>1</sup> against violations of the 'Open Door' policy which affected American nationals brought an unsatisfactory reply from Japan, which seems to have been intended as an indirect repudiation of the Nine Power Treaty.<sup>2</sup> The continued stiffening of United States policy was indicated by the announcement in December, 1938, of a \$25 million loan to China (followed by a smaller British loan and action in support of the Chinese currency) and by a further American note on December 31.<sup>3</sup> This reaffirmed the United States' attitude towards the principle of equal opportunity and maintained that valid alterations in existing international agreements could only be made by negotiation between the parties concerned. On January 14, a British

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, October 28, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, November 19, 1938; *The Manchester Guardian*, December 15, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Times*, January 2, 1939.

note in similar terms offered further evidence of the increasing resistance being offered to Japanese encroachment on the rights and interests of other nations.<sup>1</sup> The note referred to the uncertainty and anxiety felt by the British government after the recent statements of her new policy by Japan<sup>2</sup>; it declared that Great Britain would not accept or recognize changes of the kind which seemed to be contemplated, if they were brought about by force. Though she did not contend that treaties were eternal, Great Britain adhered to the principles of the Nine Power Treaty, and could not agree to unilateral modification of its terms. She was ready to consider any constructive suggestions by Japan as to how the various multilateral treaties should be modified, and would welcome a clearer statement of the conditions on which Japan would make peace and of Japanese policy towards China.

The primary aims of the policy which has been described above may be summarized as follows :

(1) A united, prosperous, and friendly China, for which one of the essentials is that all legitimate grievances relating to the unequal treaties should be removed.

(2) Generally peaceful and stable conditions in the Far East, for which the first essential is harmonious relations between China and Japan.

(3) International co-operation (including that of China herself) in the rehabilitation and development of China.

(4) The Open Door and equality of opportunity for the nationals of all countries, under which head may be included the abolition of monopolies and spheres of influence, and the maintenance of the Chinese Maritime Customs Administration.

The common link between these various aims is the desire to secure conditions favourable to British trade and enterprise. Particular attention may be drawn to the Maritime Customs Administration. It was created by a great administrator, Sir Robert Hart (an Irishman), who, while always insistent on safeguarding the sovereign rights of China, built up an administrative machine that has been a vital factor both in the financial stability and political unity of China. Probably no greater service has

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, January 16, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> The statement issued in December of the terms on which Japan would make peace with China included :

(i) Chinese recognition of Manchukuo ;  
 (ii) Chinese adherence to the anti-Comintern Pact ;  
 (iii) Consent to the stationing of Japanese troops at specified points as an anti-communist measure, and the designation of Inner Mongolia as a special anti-communist area ;  
 (iv) Freedom of residence and trade in the interior of China, with facilities for the Japanese development of China's natural resources.

See *The Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XV, No. 26.



ever been rendered by a European to an Oriental people. This has added greatly to the prestige of Great Britain, and it has also conferred great benefits on merchants trading in China, for, without an honest administration of the customs, legitimate large-scale trade would not be possible.

## The American Continent

## THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*British Political Interests*

GREAT BRITAIN'S desire for close and cordial relations with the United States is based on the strongest motives of both sentiment and interest. 'Despite the immigration of many diverse nationalities,' an American student of international affairs has said, 'the United States remains fundamentally English in language, culture, legal system, and institutions.'<sup>1</sup> The resemblances in the British and American character due to a common origin and similar social and political ideals have been much emphasized by the trend of international affairs in the last ten years. Anglo-American relations since the War have been placed upon a more secure and wider basis. Constitutional developments in the British Empire and social changes in the United Kingdom promoted a further improvement in the general feeling between the two countries which was due, strangely enough, in part to the economic depression. The United States was obliged under economic stress to adopt many of the domestic measures which it had condemned in Great Britain as symptomatic of social decadence; and it was materially assisted in its task of reconstruction by British experience. Furthermore, Great Britain's power of recovery has contributed to restore her own economic prestige which was eclipsed by American prosperity in the post-War decade.

It is difficult to say how far sentiment can be divorced from the other elements in Great Britain's interests in relation to the United States. British interests in North America are largely political, as in South America they are largely economic. Since the War the British desire for closer co-operation has been handicapped by the United States' refusal to join the League of Nations. A League of Nations policy on Great Britain's part would be welcomed by American opinion, and in so far as Great Britain is obliged to depart from the principles of the League, the potential support for her policy is greatly weakened in the United States.

<sup>1</sup> 'Is an Anglo-American Understanding Possible?' Raymond L. Buell in *International Affairs*, Vol. XVI, No. 1.

That support would be essentially based, however, on sympathy with what must be an unchanging principle of British foreign policy, whether the League survives as an active force or not—the maintenance of international law and the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes. This particular community of interest was implied by President Franklin Roosevelt in a speech delivered at Chicago in October, 1937, when he said, ‘It is . . . a matter of vital interest and concern to the people of the United States that the sanctity of international treaties and the maintenance of international morality be restored’.

When the President spoke of an ‘epidemic of lawlessness’ and of a ‘quarantine of the patients’, he and his audience would have thought less of breaches of law and peace in Europe (towards which the United States’ attitude of isolation is sufficiently indicated by the neutrality legislation of the last few years<sup>1</sup>) than of recent events in the Far East. Japanese policy in the Sino-Japanese struggle has emphasized the fact that British and American interests in China are generally similar. While the American commercial and financial stake is not so large as the British, the United States is the greatest of the English-speaking Pacific countries, she is vitally concerned in the balance of power in that ocean, and has, moreover, taken an unusually large part in the political and cultural westernization of the Far East. The difference of attitude is brought out by the fact that the Neutrality Act was applied to the Civil War in Spain, but not to the conflict in China, where its provisions would work entirely in favour of Japan. But the Brussels Conference, convened on the basis of the Nine Power Treaty to consider problems of policy towards the war in China, was ineffective despite American participation, and the small results of parallel British and American diplomatic activity show how little can be achieved by co-operation which is not supported by the willingness and the ability to answer force with force.

In view of the apparent willingness of American opinion to sacrifice American interests in many parts of the world in a determination to avoid war, it is impossible for Great Britain to count on American co-operation, even if British and American interests should be identical. The most that can be said is perhaps that it may be an advantage to Great Britain that those interests seldom come into conflict with her own. By virtue of the Monroe Doctrine, the United States is the guarantor of the Americas against European or Asiatic aggression. Great Britain has always recognized the Monroe Doctrine, since she desires the

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the Neutrality Acts, see below, pp. 230-3.

peaceful development which it may promote in that part of the world.

### *The Monroe Doctrine*

The policy of the United States in the Western Hemisphere, which was formulated in the early nineteenth century by President Monroe, and bears his name, has been a factor of such importance in the relations between Great Britain and North and South America that it seems desirable to give some account of its origin and subsequent application. Both the United States and Great Britain were alarmed after the Napoleonic wars and the restoration of monarchical institutions in Europe at the possibility of France and Russia giving assistance to Spain to reconquer the Spanish colonies in South America. Canning's recognition of the independence of the South American Republics in 1825 was a decisive check to the designs of France and Spain : in 1823, however, the American President had taken independent action which was intended to establish the United States' 'rights and interests' in the maintenance of the 'free and independent condition' of the American continents. 'We owe it,' the message to Congress ran, 'to candor, and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those [the European] Powers, to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.'

The Doctrine was first affirmed in circumstances which included complete command of the seas by Great Britain. The growing power of the United States made it inevitable that it should assume a new importance in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1895 it was reaffirmed in a new sense on the occasion of the frontier dispute between British Guiana and Venezuela. It was declared to give the United States a direct concern in the dispute and to bind her to prevent the sequestration of Venezuelan territory by Great Britain. Great Britain eventually submitted the dispute to arbitration and in effect acquiesced in the protective attitude towards Latin America which the United States had assumed. The Monroe Doctrine had been universally accepted by 1900, but in the next decade it became subject to new interpretations which made it less acceptable, at least in South America. The most typical of these interpretations was that supplied by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, when he declared that the Doctrine conferred a 'police power' throughout the New World on the United States. During the next twenty years the Doctrine was frequently so construed and became the basis of United States intervention in the domestic affairs of the

Central American Republics. The validity of the Doctrine was recognized in the Covenant of the League of Nations. It was given the widest possible interpretation by the United States Senate in 1928, when a report was adopted declaring that the Kellogg Pact should not prevent the United States from using force in defence of the Doctrine ; it was also held that the United States had complete freedom of interpretation of the Doctrine and its implications, even in deciding whether or not to protect Latin American States from external aggression.

In the ten years since this claim was made there has been a complete and deliberate change in United States policy towards South and Central America. Political control in Central America has been relaxed, the policy of active intervention to protect United States citizens and in support of established governments has been abandoned, and the interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine has been modified. The United States accepted the Pan-American Convention on Conciliation and Arbitration in 1929 ; and the change of attitude culminated in the policy of President Franklin Roosevelt's Administration. The greatest triumph of Mr. Roosevelt's policy of ' the good neighbour ' was the Buenos Aires Conference of 1936, when the Monroe Doctrine was converted into a multilateral agreement. The satisfaction of the Latin-American Republics at this relinquishment of arbitrary authority was summed up by the phrase : ' The United States has at last joined the Pan-American family.'

The eighth Pan-American Conference at Lima in December, 1938, was notable for the importance attached in the United States to its reaching a declaration of solidarity against political or military attack by the fascist Powers. Fears of such attack had been roused by the progress of Italian and German propaganda and trade, and had been heightened by the outcome of the Munich Conference. Many of the South American Republics suspected that the United States eagerness for a common resistance to ' fascist penetration ' might in the future provide her with a pretext for returning to those unilateral interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine which had been so unpopular before the Buenos Aires Conference. While the diplomacy of the United States delegates succeeded in more or less allaying these suspicions, the ' Declaration of Lima ' adopted at the conclusion of the Conference <sup>1</sup> showed traces of their influence. The solidarity of the twenty-one governments attending the Conference was declared to be based on an ' identity of principles ' which created a ' spiritual unity ' and which the nations assembled were deter-

<sup>1</sup> On December 26, 1938 ; see *The Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XV, No. 26.



mined to maintain and defend 'against all foreign intervention or activity that may threaten them'. But the Declaration throughout emphasized the equal and absolute sovereignty of the countries concerned and proclaimed that if they were to make their solidarity effective they could do so by 'the co-ordination of their respective sovereign wills, by consultation, by conventions, and, finally, by the adoption of measures advisable in the circumstances—each government acting independently as a sovereign State'.<sup>1</sup>

### *British Financial and Commercial Interests*

Great Britain and the United States of America are the two most important trading nations of the world. Between them they do nearly 30 per cent. of the world's trade, and, if the whole British Empire be included, more than 40 per cent. In the import trade of the United States the United Kingdom takes second place, supplying 8.3 per cent. of America's imports (Canada is first with 15.5 per cent.). As a market for American goods, she takes first place, with 17.9 per cent. of America's exports. The United States of America is the largest importer into Great Britain, with 11 per cent. of her total imports, but she takes only fourth place as a market for British exports, with 6.3 per cent. of Great Britain's total exports.

Great Britain's imports from America are chiefly raw materials and foodstuffs. The total amount imported was in 1937, £114.2 million; and raw cotton (£19.6 million), tobaccos (£14.1 million), wheat (£1.7 million), mineral oils (£8.3 million), and machinery (£11.7 million) accounted for just under half the total. Imports of wheat have fallen off considerably in the last few years (in 1929 £11.7 million were imported and in 1937 only £1.7 million), but this is due not so much to the effect of Imperial preference introduced by the Ottawa agreements, as to the drought and crop restriction in the United States. American criticism of British trade policy since 1932 is inspired rather by its effect on American exports of timber, bacon and hams, apples and other fruits. The United States' share in the British market for North Pacific lumber dropped from 74.5 per cent. in 1929 to 6 per cent. in 1936, as Canada profited by Imperial Preference. British imports of hams and bacon have been restricted by quota since 1932, and in the fresh and preserved fruit market Canada and South Africa have gained at America's expense, though the decrease in imports of fruit can, to some extent, be explained by variation of crops in the United States. The British preferential tariff affects also the American industrial exports to England,

<sup>1</sup> *The Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XV, No. 26, p. 35.

especially motor-cars, electrical apparatus, refrigerating machines and typewriters, but to a lesser degree than agricultural products, as most American industries of this type have branches in Canada, and their products, therefore, enjoy Imperial Preference throughout the Empire.

Exports from Great Britain to the United States amounted to £31.4 million in 1937. The only article which compares with the larger items in the United Kingdom imports from the United States is whisky, of which £6.6 million were exported from the United Kingdom in 1937. The other chief exports from the United Kingdom for 1937 were wool textiles £1.8 million, linen £1.6 million, tin £1.5 million, and leather £1.4 million. The American tariff policy has been responsible for a considerable fall in British exports to the United States. Imports of the sixty dutiable commodities of which Great Britain has been recently the chief supplier (woollen goods, linen, cotton goods, and anthracite come under this heading) have fallen since 1928 by an average of 73.5 per cent.

From the above analysis of the trade between the United States and Great Britain, it is clear that the balance of merchandise trade is heavily in favour of the United States. The net balance for 1936 was £51 million to the credit of America. Against this, invisible items such as shipping, insurance and interest and dividends were estimated at £20 million; the net balance of £31 million (to which must be added new British capital investment in the United States) was covered by a movement of gold to a total of £48 million.

British investments in the United States have, by comparison with 1914, decreased considerably. During the nineteenth century a very large proportion of British long-term overseas investments went to America, and the figure in 1914 was £754 million, or 20 per cent. of total British long-term overseas investments. During the War the British government mobilized and sold many of the British holdings in the United States and contracted loans in order to be able to buy foodstuffs and armaments, and other Allied governments acted similarly, with the result that the United States emerged from the War as a creditor instead of a debtor nation. By 1930, British long-term investments in the United States had, it was estimated, decreased to £186 million, or 5 per cent. of Great Britain's total overseas holdings. In the latter months of 1937, however, grave concern was expressed in government circles in the United States about the growth of foreign investments in the country, particularly the large volume of short-term investment funds which were being deposited there. It was stated that British investors owned 20 per cent. of foreign

investments in the United States and that they were in a position to cause a panic on the American market if they wished to sell their securities in considerable numbers. A proposal that, in the interest of American financial stability, foreign investors should be taxed was very much criticized and protested against by those countries who had large holdings in the United States.

It has been the declared policy of Mr. Roosevelt's administration to conclude trade agreements with as many countries as possible with a view to increasing the volume of international trade and ridding the world of many of the economic restrictions which grew so rapidly in the period of depression. The Anglo-American Trade Agreement which—together with an agreement between the United States and Canada—was signed in November, 1938, was an important contribution to the policy of Mr. Roosevelt's Secretary of State. The agreement was many months under negotiation, owing partly to the complicated background of Imperial Preference and the elaborate constitutional machinery for ensuring full respect for private interests in the United States. It represented the grant of genuine if limited tariff concessions by each party, made possible on the British side by the willingness of the Dominions and India to limit their rights under the Ottawa agreements. Its greatest significance, however, was undoubtedly political.

### *The Freedom of the Seas and Neutral Rights*

The United States possesses a munition industry of vast capacity, whose expansion was, in fact, promoted largely by the part she played, both before and after her becoming a belligerent, in the war of 1914-8; she is in command of mineral reserves producing more than half the oil which the world consumes.<sup>1</sup> The question of to whom and under what conditions these resources are to be available in time of war is necessarily an important consideration in any scheme of British strategy. The American doctrine of the freedom of the seas and American insistence upon the neutral's right to trade with belligerents was responsible for the only war between Great Britain and the United States; and American policy in this respect must always be, as it was in the last war, a matter of great concern to the United Kingdom if it should be engaged in a European war involving a naval blockade. A

<sup>1</sup> It is true that but a small proportion of the oil produced in the States is normally available for export. Of 134,912,000 tons produced in 1935 (*League of Nations Statistical Year Book 1937*, p. 126) only 4,986,000 tons of crude and refined petroleum were exported (*International Trade Statistics*, 1936, p. 112). Under war conditions, however, this proportion would be unlikely to remain constant.

consciousness of the dangers inherent in this situation doubtless inspired Lord Baldwin's remark, made in a speech at Glasgow in 1934, that 'Never, so long as I have any responsibility for governing this country, will I sanction the British Navy being used for a naval blockade until I know what the United States of America is going to do'.<sup>1</sup>

The present position is a result of the legislation adopted during and after the Italo-Abyssinian conflict of 1935-36. Whether or not it may be held in America or elsewhere that the signature of the Briand-Kellogg Pact for the outlawry of war had fundamentally altered America's position as a neutral, it is certain that during the first half of 1935 much less was to be heard in Washington of 'neutral rights' and much more of 'neutral duties'. It was generally recognized that America might, by adhering firmly to her rights as a neutral, be taking the side of the aggressor against the attempts of the League to enforce the sanctions of the Covenant. There emerged in these circumstances a conception of 'neutrality in equity' which was opposed to the traditional American conception held until 1918.

If the Roosevelt Administration had based its policy on the traditional conception of neutrality and allowed private vendors to supply munitions and war materials to both belligerents, leaving to the belligerents the freedom to interfere with each other's supplies, it would in effect have sided with Italy in the war in East Africa. If, on the other hand, it had imposed embargoes similar to the embargoes that were being imposed by the League on imports and 'key products', it would have assisted the League even if the measures were applied impartially to both Italy and Abyssinia. The Administration attempted to follow a middle policy, prohibited the export of arms to either belligerent, expressed the wish that trade with Italy should remain at 'normal peace-time levels' and warned American citizens that they travelled on belligerent ships at their own risk. This action was taken under the Neutrality Act of August, 1935. In an explanatory statement to his proclamation of a state of war between Italy and Ethiopia in October, the President added: 'In these specific circumstances I desire it to be understood that any of our people who voluntarily engage in transactions of any character with either of the belligerents do so at their own risk.' This was certainly the most important official pronouncement of the American attitude which was made in those months, for it abrogated for the time being the doctrine of the 'freedom of the seas', and this implied that the League Powers, or Great Britain on their behalf, might institute a naval blockade of Italy

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, November 24, 1934.

without great danger of coming into conflict with the United States.

The Act of 1935 was re-enacted with certain alterations in February, 1936, and remained in force until May, 1937, by which time consideration had been given to more permanent measures. The Neutrality Act, passed on the expiry of the earlier legislation in 1937, provides similarly for a mandatory arms embargo against both parties, and similarly prevents the President from discriminating in any way between belligerents. The President is required to extend the arms embargo to other States as and when they become involved in any conflict. The financial provisions of the Act make it unlawful for persons in the United States to deal in bonds or securities of any belligerent government, or of the parties to a civil war, or to make loans or extend credits to such governments or their agents. (The President may except ordinary loans and commercial credits from this provision.) The Act goes further than that of August 1935, in that American citizens are not merely warned against travelling in belligerent ships, but are in fact forbidden to do so. A separate standard is set up for American States ; it is provided that the Act shall not apply to an American republic which is at war with a non-American State, unless it is collaborating with non-American States.

The provisions of the 1937 Act which are most interesting from the British point of view are those relating to the permissive prohibition of the export of certain goods other than munitions and those embodying what is known as the 'cash and carry' policy. The President is empowered to place restrictions on the shipment of 'certain articles or materials in addition to arms, ammunition and implements of war' if this action should be 'necessary to promote the security or preserve the peace of the United States, or to protect the lives of citizens of the United States'. The importance of this provision would obviously depend upon the interpretation given it by the Administration in power ; thus, if it had been embodied in the 1935 Act the President would have been able, had he wished, to prohibit the shipment of oil to Italy or Abyssinia. The 'cash and carry' principle is that by which it is declared unlawful to export any articles or materials whatever to a belligerent State 'until all right, title and interest therein' shall have been transferred to some foreign government, agency, institution, or person. These latter provisions would operate strongly in favour of the Power which commanded the seas and could furnish the financial resources and ships to obtain supplies, although they are designed merely to reduce the danger of conflicts between the United States and belligerents arising from the



exercise of the right of search. American vessels are to be precluded from 'blockade-running' and belligerent trade is to be confined to non-American ships.

## THE ATLANTIC AND THE PANAMA CANAL

### *British Geographical and Strategic Interests*

Great Britain's position in the Atlantic was as favourable to the part she has played in the political and economic development of North America as the position of Spain was to Spanish expansion in Mexico and the South American continent. The outcome of European rivalries for the control of the Atlantic and Great Britain's ultimate success in becoming the *entrepôt* of the trade between the Old World and the New have left her in possession of various strategic points which are to-day of less importance than they were even fifty years ago, but which might conceivably come to serve some of their former purposes in a future struggle.

### *The West Indies*

The expansion of the United States and the opening of the Panama Canal have temporarily diminished the strategic importance of the British West Indies. The West Indian islands form roughly a semicircle stretching from the Bahamas, on a level with Florida, to Trinidad near the mouth of the Orinoco. The islands are widely scattered and the British possessions among them are not compactly grouped. Two of the four shipping routes from the Atlantic to the Caribbean are flanked by British ports. The windward passage between Haiti and Cuba is faced by Jamaica, which has a defended naval fuelling station, Port Royal (Kingston); and the south-east passage between Trinidad and Barbados, the natural route for traffic to the Panama Canal for the east coast of South America, is flanked by Castries in St. Lucia, a coaling station. In Trinidad there is also a deep-water harbour at Port of Spain, where the harbour is undefended, and oiling facilities at Point-à-Pierre. Nevertheless the value of all these strategic points and in particular of Port Royal, the most highly developed of them, has been entirely altered by the commanding position in the Caribbean occupied by the United States since the Spanish-American War of 1898. When the United States had annexed Porto Rico and assumed a virtual protectorate over Cuba, Haiti and Santo Domingo, the Gulf of Mexico and the greater part of the Caribbean were enclosed within a ring of American bases which make it impossible and probably, from the point of view of British interests, unnecessary for Great Britain to exercise the

power which her West Indian possessions had once seemed to give her.

### *The Panama Canal*

The American bases in the Caribbean are designed largely for the defence of the Panama Canal, which, protected by these naval outworks on the Atlantic, by the American base of Balboa on the Pacific and by the fortifications and garrison of the Canal Zone itself, is one of the most strongly defended regions in the world. The Panama Canal, fifty miles long, runs through a zone ten miles in width, granted in 1903 by the Republic of Panama to the United States in perpetuity. Though, by the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, made between Great Britain and the United States in 1901, it was agreed that the Canal, when constructed, should be neutral, 'free and open to the vessels of commerce and of war of all nations, in peace or war, on terms of equality', the American Government obtained the right to take such measures as are necessary for the local protection of the Canal; and have on these grounds made the Canal Zone an entirely military reservation and fortified area. The concentration of naval and military force in this area is due to the strategic and economic value of the Canal to the United States. By means of this waterway American commerce can be carried much more cheaply from the eastern manufacturing region to the western ports than by rail across the continent; the eastern manufacturing region is brought closer to the great markets of the Far East; and the United States can now concentrate her entire naval strength in either the Pacific or the Atlantic nearly three weeks more quickly than before the Canal was opened.

The effect of the Panama Canal on Great Britain's sea routes is mainly in relation to the west coast of North and South America and to New Zealand. All ports north of Panama on the American Coast, such as Vancouver, are brought approximately 6,000 miles nearer to Liverpool; all ports south of Panama are brought on the average 2,600 miles nearer. The harbours of New Zealand are brought 1,500 miles nearer to Great Britain. As a link of communication for the trade of the Empire, the Canal is important chiefly in relation to New Zealand and British Columbia. Much traffic which would formerly have gone from British Columbia by rail across the continent to be shipped at Montreal now goes entirely by sea through the Canal. A line drawn north and south through Regina at the moment marks the parts of Canada which would for economic reasons prefer the eastern and western routes. The great value of the newer route to that part of Canada west of the economic 'divide' is shown by the enormous

increase in the amount of wheat shipped from Canada during the last few years by way of Panama.

While the Panama Canal is thus of commercial interest to Great Britain, its strategic value is somewhat less substantial. As a means of communication with the British possessions and Dominions in the Pacific its value is diminished by the long distances that have to be covered before bases of supply are reached. The shorter routes by the Suez Canal and the Cape of Good Hope would certainly be more convenient in defending Imperial communications to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific area.

### *Bermuda and Newfoundland*

The British garrison station of Bermuda flanks very closely on the north-west the direct route from Plymouth to the West Indies, Mexico, Venezuela and the Panama Canal. It flanks on the south-east the direct routes to the United States and Canada, and is thus almost equally distant from Halifax, Boston, New York and the Bahamas. Bermuda, which is not developed as a first-class base, is a valuable connecting link with the West Indies. The islands could be made of great strength; and if an air service from England to the West Indies is established, Bermuda is to be made a port of call. The projected winter Transatlantic Air Route goes by way of the Azores and Bermuda to New York. A regular air service to New York has recently been initiated.

Another North Atlantic island which may acquire a new importance owing to air communications between Europe and America is Newfoundland, which lies across the entrance to the St. Lawrence, only 1,800 miles from the British Isles. The Labrador Peninsula, which was part of the Ancient Colony of Newfoundland proper and is to-day administered as part of its territory, lies on one projected summer air route from Europe to the United States, that by the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and Labrador. Newfoundland lies on another, that by Great Britain and Ireland. Newfoundland has many natural harbours, but the prevalence of fog reduces their usefulness: at present, with the exception of St. John's, they are undeveloped. As a cable station Newfoundland is as important as a potential naval base, for the Avalon Peninsula is the landing-place of most of the transatlantic cables.

### *Other British Possessions*

The Falkland Islands flank the trade routes from South America and the approach to the Pacific by Cape Horn, from which they are distant by about 500 miles. There is a valuable fuelling and wireless station at Port Stanley, though the harbour

is not defended or garrisoned. The Cape Horn route to the Pacific is now comparatively unimportant.<sup>1</sup>

### *British Economic Interests in the Atlantic Possessions*

Great Britain's trade with her Atlantic dependencies forms only a small part of her total trade. Imports from these colonies were in 1936 £6·5 million, less than 1 per cent. of total British imports. The following table shows the distribution between the different colonies.

	£
Trinidad and Tobago . . . . .	2,300,000
Jamaica . . . . .	2,000,000
British Guiana . . . . .	1,014,000
Barbados . . . . .	447,000
Leeward Isles . . . . .	317,000
Windward Isles . . . . .	211,000
British Honduras . . . . .	100,000
Bahamas . . . . .	20,000
Bermuda . . . . .	2,400

Apart from oil and asphalt, which come from Trinidad, the West Indian and American colonies export mainly agricultural products, such as sugar, bananas and cocoa.

The colonies provide a small market for British goods ; British exports to them amounted in 1936 to £8 million or 2 per cent. of her total exports. The following table shows the distribution of this sum between the various colonies.

	£
Trinidad and Tobago . . . . .	2,300,000
Jamaica . . . . .	2,000,000
British Guiana . . . . .	1,100,000
Barbados . . . . .	860,000
Bermuda . . . . .	617,000
Windward Isles . . . . .	332,000
Leeward Isles . . . . .	275,000
Bahamas . . . . .	256,000
British Honduras . . . . .	174,000

The amount of British investment in her West Indian possessions was estimated in 1930 at £40 million, 1·1 per cent. of her total overseas investments.

## LATIN AMERICA

### *South America*

As far as British economic interests in South America are concerned, Argentina is by far the most important of the ten republics. In 1936, 5·2 per cent. of Great Britain's total imports

<sup>1</sup> For the British ports in West and South Africa which might serve to keep open the South Atlantic trade routes, see the section on p. 183 above on the Cape route to India.

came from there, taking the form chiefly of foodstuffs and other agricultural products. In 1937, 14 per cent. of her imports of wheat (£7·2 million worth) came from the Argentine. She imported £14·9 million worth of maize from the Argentine in 1936, which amounted to 91 per cent. of her total imports. The imports of Argentine meat for that year amounted to £18·8 million, representing 24 per cent. of Britain's meat supply. Other important imports from the Republic are wool and hides and skins. The imports of wool for 1936 were £3 million, 6·5 per cent. of Britain's total supply, and the imports of hides and skins amounted to £1·4 million, 7 per cent. of her imports of this commodity. Since the introduction of Imperial Preference at Ottawa in 1932, agreements have been made (in 1933 and 1936) between Great Britain and the Argentine, regulating imports of foodstuffs from that country. Argentine is guaranteed a minimum quota of British imports of beef. The United Kingdom secured reduced tariffs on certain of its exports.

Imports from Brazil in 1936 reached the figure of £9·9 million, 1·2 per cent. of Great Britain's imports. The chief commodities on the list were cotton, of which £4·0 million, 9 per cent. of the total supply, were imported in that year, and fresh fruits valued at £2·1 million, 5·6 per cent. of her imports of that commodity. Chile was the third largest South American exporter to Great Britain in 1936, the figure for that year being £5·2 million, 0·6 per cent. of her total imports. The chief articles were copper, of which £2·8 million, or 24 per cent. of the total supply, were imported in that year, and smelted tin, which amounted to £400 thousand, 6 per cent. of the total supply. There was also a small import of nitrates. Petroleum is another important British import from South America, the chief supplier in this case being Venezuela. £466,000 worth of crude oil was sent direct to Great Britain in 1936, but the great bulk of Venezuelan crude oil is exported to the refineries in the Dutch West Indian Islands, Curaçao and Aruba, whence it is re-exported to Great Britain. Exports of petroleum from the Dutch West Indian Islands to Great Britain amounted, in 1936, to £11·8 million. In 1936 £3·7 million of tin ore was imported from Bolivia, which represented more than 50 per cent. of the supply of unsmelted tin.

The balance of payments, as far as merchandise is concerned, is unfavourable to Great Britain, except in the cases of Paraguay, Ecuador, and Colombia. The Argentine is the largest market in South America for British goods, taking £15·5 million worth, 3·1 per cent. of Great Britain's total exports in 1936. The chief commodities were cotton piece goods, which in that year were 5 per cent. of her exports of that commodity; woollen and worsted



manufactures, 6 per cent. of her exports; iron and steel manufactures, 5 per cent. of her exports; coal 6 per cent., and machinery 2·5 per cent. Great Britain's total exports to Brazil in 1936 amounted to £4·9 million, 1 per cent. of her total exports, and to Chile £1·8 million, 0·3 per cent. of her total exports.

The unfavourable balance of payments, created by the surplus of merchandise imports from South America over merchandise exports from Great Britain, is offset by the earnings on British long-term overseas investment in that continent. In 1930, it ranked second only to the British Empire as a recipient for British long-term capital. The following table shows the amount of British investment in South America in 1930, its distribution between the ten republics, and the percentage it forms of total British overseas investment.

1930	£ millions	Percentage of Total British Overseas Investment
Argentina . . . . .	450	12·0
Brazil . . . . .	190	5·0
Chile . . . . .	50	1·3
Rest of South America .	85	2·3
Total	775	20·6

### *Mexico*

The question of British interests in Mexico has come very much to the fore in the last year, owing to the expropriation of the property of the British and American oil companies by the Mexican government on March 18, 1938. British imports from Mexico amounted in 1937 to £3,847,026, or 0·3 per cent. of total British imports for that year. This figure does not give an adequate representation of the importance of British trade with Mexico, until it is more closely analysed. Petroleum accounted for 50 per cent., or £1,911,044 of these imports from Mexico, which is an important source of supply to Great Britain. Her importance is made considerably greater because the supplies do not have to pass through the Mediterranean. Mexico represents only a small market for United Kingdom goods, the total amount of British exports to that country in 1937 being only £1,738,863, or less than 0·3 per cent. of total British exports. Great Britain takes a high place as a source of Mexican imports, although her share has been declining since 1934, and she now ranks third, after the United States and Germany. The estimate for British long-term overseas investment in Mexico in 1930 was £59

million, 1.6 per cent. of total British overseas investments. The bulk of British investment in Mexican government and municipal securities has been in default for the last twenty to twenty-five years.

The value of investment at stake in the seventeen British and American oil companies which were expropriated on March 18, 1938, has been estimated roughly at £80,000,000. The Mexican Eagle Company, 85 per cent. of which is British owned, owned 65 per cent. of the total investment, including the new and profitable concessions arranged in November 1937.

After an exchange of notes between the British and Mexican governments during April and May, 1938, in which the British government protested against the expropriation decree and the Mexican government reaffirmed its decision, the Mexican government broke off diplomatic relations on May 14. The British Minister was subsequently withdrawn. The oil companies, at the end of January, 1939, continue to await the decision of the Supreme Court of Mexico concerning the ownership of their investments. The question of compensation is also in abeyance. President Cardenas has stated publicly his government's determination to award adequate payment to the expropriated companies. The projected issue of 'bonds of national redemption' to a value of 100,000,000 pesos was, however, cancelled in June, 1938, on account of internal financial difficulties.

The expropriation gave a three-fold blow to British interests in Mexico. Firstly, British investors have lost control of valuable concessions, and the prospect of receiving due compensation is doubtful. Secondly, the Mexican government has protested vigorously against the legal ability of the British government to support the claims of its investors, since the Mexican Eagle Company is subject to Mexican law. Thirdly, despite the statement of President Cardenas in April, 1938, that Mexico would not sell oil 'to fascist and aggressor states', considerable oil deals, mainly on a barter basis, have been reported with Italy, Japan and, more especially, Germany.

The outlook for the oil companies is not hopeful and their interests urgently require the conduct of a policy agreed by all the injured parties, the United States, Holland and Great Britain.



*PART II*

IMPERIAL DEFENCE





## The Problem

*The Problem Stated*

THE geographical distribution of the countries which form the British Empire is such that, with the exception of the British corridor along the east side of Africa, there is no possibility of the development of interconnecting land or air routes which do not cross foreign territories. On the other hand, there are numerous and often lengthy land frontiers that lie between many of the constituent parts of the Empire and the adjacent foreign countries. Outstanding instances of this feature are to be found in India, Burma, Africa and in North America, where Canada presents the only instance of contact with a first-class Power. Instances of where the frontier is short, but the contact of major importance, are found in the two naval bases of Gibraltar and Hong Kong.

It is clear, therefore, that unless Great Britain and every one of the Dominions and the colonies is capable of looking after its own Defence—an impossible hypothesis—the problem of Imperial defence resolves itself into one of ensuring the possibility of mutual assistance<sup>1</sup> which in turn becomes, primarily, a problem of communications by sea and by air. Before considering these in detail, it is necessary to draw a clear picture of Great Britain's own situation, since to-day she carries the major portion of the burden of Imperial Defence, and is, in many respects, the most vulnerable partner in the Commonwealth. Great Britain's dependence upon outside sources of food and raw materials is too well known to require much emphasis, but it is not perhaps generally recognized that every day 50,000 tons of foodstuffs and 110,000 tons of merchandise are imported into England. Any effective restriction of these imports would in the course of a very few months lead to economic strangulation and to the starvation of the populace. These dangers demand that measures should be taken to ensure that there shall be no interruption of imports, and this connotes not only the freedom of passage for ships along the trade routes leading to Great Britain, but also immunity from air attack whilst they approach, or unload in, the home ports. Of the

<sup>1</sup> The phrase 'mutual assistance' is used here and in the succeeding pages, but certain reservations must be made clear at the outset. While Great Britain, from not entirely altruistic motives, unreservedly accepts her liability to go to the assistance of any Dominion should it be attacked, the Dominions have a right to decide the conditions and extent of their participation, if any, in a war involving Great Britain and the dependent Empire.

dangers attending the assurance of the former of these two requisites she had ample experience in the Great War, but she was then, comparatively speaking, immune from the latter. To-day the situation is vastly different and the proximity of potential enemies in Europe has, owing to the increased menace of air attack, focused the attention of the British government on Home Defence. The danger of the invasion of the British Isles by Germany in August and September 1914 was considered by the government of the day to be sufficiently serious to necessitate the retention in England of one-third of the small Expeditionary Force until the Territorial Army had been mobilized ; it was not till then that the two remaining regular divisions could be released and go to the help of their much-harassed comrades in France. To-day, while the risks of military invasion and, still more, of armed occupation are very much reduced, the danger of heavy bombardment is a very real one ; but it will come in the form of air attack and, quite rightly, in his speech on March 11, 1938, defining the rôle of the British Army, the Secretary of State for War placed Home Defence against air attack first in order of importance.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the keeping open of the trade routes between the British Isles and the sources from which their supplies of food and raw materials are drawn is one of the two essential requisites in the problem of their defence, this condition automatically provides for the security of the sea lines of communication with the other States of the Empire, and thus ensures the possibility of mutual support. Two objects, both of them vital to Imperial Defence, are therefore attained if these sea communications can be kept open. It is clear, however, that, unless the defence of the Islands themselves against attack, whether sea or air borne, can be adequately provided for, there will be no possibility of Great Britain succouring the overseas Empire in time of war. If the great industrial areas which produce munitions of war are prevented either by destruction or by fear from producing them, if her ports are rendered untenable for shipping, if her naval bases and dockyards become unsafe as refuges for her fleet, then her naval, air, and land forces become impotent for the very purposes for which they exist, and defeat must follow.

The oceanic areas through which Great Britain's most important communications run are the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

The importance of the Atlantic Ocean lies in the fact that a large

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 332, col. 2136. Mr. Hore-Belisha reaffirmed this on March 8, 1939, on presenting the Army Estimates for 1939-40 to the House of Commons.

proportion of Great Britain's food and other supplies come from the American continent ; for instance, along the South Atlantic trade routes are transported much of her wheat and flour, about half of her meat, a third of her wool, and nearly all of her tin ore (as distinct from smelted tin). The main imports from the North American continent include wheat, mineral oils, raw cotton, timber, nickel, tobacco, copper, etc. To ensure the free passage of the mercantile marine, the ships of the Royal Navy must have fortified bases from which to operate. Halifax, the base of the Royal Canadian Navy, flanks the chief routes across the North Atlantic. Bermuda, though not very closely, flanks the direct route from Plymouth to the Panama Canal. The importance of Jamaica has considerably diminished since the United States has developed her defences in the Caribbean Sea ; but, in the event of her maintaining a strict neutrality in any future war, Kingston, in Jamaica, would provide the only other defended port for the Navy in the western Atlantic. The Falkland Islands flank the approach to the Pacific by Cape Horn; they possess a valuable fuelling and wireless station at Port Stanley, an asset which contributed in no small degree to the overthrow of Admiral von Spee's squadron in December, 1914. In the eastern Atlantic, Freetown, the harbour of Sierra Leone, is likely to play an important part in the future.

The Mediterranean Sea has always been regarded as a highway of the greatest importance to the Empire. It affords, by way of the Suez Canal, the shortest line for sending reinforcements to the East, and its safeguarding has always been a cardinal factor in all considerations of strategy which affected the safety of India, Australia and New Zealand, as well as British interests in the Far East. Its importance has increased with the growing dependence of all means of transport on oil, of which the United Kingdom imported over 3,000 million gallons in 1937. Of this quantity approximately 29 per cent. reached England by way of the Mediterranean and, of that proportion, one-fifth is brought overland by pipe from 'Iraq to Haifa. To safeguard this route Great Britain holds the fortified naval bases of Gibraltar and Malta ; under her treaty with Egypt she maintains a land and air garrison in that country to safeguard the Suez Canal, whilst her mandatory authority in Palestine and her treaty obligations in 'Iraq enable her to control those areas to some extent. The situation in the Mediterranean basin has always depended on the varying attitudes of the principal Mediterranean Powers. At the beginning of the present century, prior to the *entente* with France, the British position was not an easy one. Even after the conclusion of the *entente*, the possibility that Italy, as a member of the Triple Alliance,

might be hostile necessitated an adjustment of naval forces between the United Kingdom and France in order to secure their joint interests. After the Great War the position was secured for many years by friendly relations with France and Italy. So far as Italy was concerned, however, those relations were interrupted by the Italian attack on Abyssinia and the application of sanctions by the League of Nations, in which the United Kingdom and France necessarily took a prominent part. In 1938, however, an agreement was reached between the United Kingdom and Italy, which to some extent eased the situation.

The future depends upon issues which no one can foretell. Prior to the Anglo-Italian Agreement the establishment of Italian domination in Libya and Abyssinia suggested that the real objective of Italy's aspirations might be to turn the Mediterranean into an Italian sea. The Spanish Civil War has added the possibility of further Italian expansion westwards in the Mediterranean; if this materialized it might affect the security of Gibraltar. Any resistance, therefore, to an attack by Italy on Egypt or Palestine might well have to be reinforced from the East and up the Red Sea to Suez : and in this connexion the possibility of organizing a fleet base at Cyprus merits serious consideration.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion of the Anglo-Italian Agreement gave rise to the hope that, provided it were followed up with patience and persistence, the situation might take a more favourable turn. On a long view there is much to be said for the theory that, fundamentally, the British Empire, France, and Italy have a common interest in a free Mediterranean. The British Empire requires a safe route to the Far East. This is also of interest to France who, in addition, has a paramount concern in a safe route for reinforcements and commerce to and from her North African possessions. Italy equally needs a free Mediterranean in order to ensure her communications with Libya, which otherwise, in the event of war, is liable to attack from Tunis and Egypt. She requires also sure access to the Red Sea ports serving Abyssinia, where years of peaceful development are a vital necessity. Apart from this, although Italy still adheres firmly to the Berlin-Rome Axis, the establishment of German troops on the Brenner has caused misgivings in the minds of thinking Italians.

The mutual interests of the three nations in the Mediterranean can best be secured by agreement, for none of them can view with equanimity the hazards of a war in that region. From a purely military point of view, however, the air menace has to some extent discounted the value of the two British bases in the Mediterranean which, until a few years ago, were regarded as practically im-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 114-116 above.

pregnable. Their future value depends on the friendliness, or at least the neutrality, of the two great Mediterranean Powers ; and circumstances might even arise in which all reinforcements sent to the East from the United Kingdom would have to be sent round the Cape of Good Hope.

The Indian Ocean is almost a British lake. Almost every important port is British, and more than a quarter of the mercantile marine of the Empire is at any given time in its harbours or on its seaways. British control has been based on two main axioms, namely, that no great Power should establish a defended port within the area and that Great Britain should command the gateways from other seas. It is easy to see how far this present security would be modified if any foreign Power should be in a position to deny her the use of the Suez Canal, to dominate the Straits of Malacca, or to establish bases on the east coast of Africa.

The entrance to the Indian Ocean from the west is guarded by Aden, the only fortified British port between Malta and Bombay, from which it is distant respectively 2,300 and 1,600 miles. Amongst other important harbours on the western side are Simonstown, a naval base maintained and defended by the Union of South Africa ; in view of its probably increased importance in the future it is as well to record its distances from Southampton, Halifax, Bombay and Melbourne, which are respectively 6,000, 6,500, 4,600 and 5,800 sea miles. There are also harbours at Port Louis in Mauritius, at Durban, Kilindini in Kenya, and Dar-es-Salaam.

The important harbours in India and Burma are Karachi, Bombay, Calcutta and Rangoon ; but at none of these ports is there any dock accommodation for large fighting ships. In Ceylon there are the ports of Colombo and Trincomalee, the latter of which has recently acquired an increased importance, owing to the trend of affairs in the Far East, and is being developed as a naval base.

The most important eastern gateway is through the Malacca Strait, the entrance to which is controlled by Singapore. But access from the Far East can be obtained also through the straits between Sumatra and Java and between Java and the numerous islands which lie to the east of it. The control of all these gateways could be assured only by a strong naval force based on Darwin in North Australia, a fact which has led to measures for its defence and its development as a naval base. The entrance to the Indian Ocean round the south coast of Australia is so remote from the naval bases of any great Power that it is unlikely to be the scene of intense naval activity. But it should be noted that Australia



has provided a naval base at Port Jackson (Sydney), the base of the Royal Australian Navy, and a number of defended harbours.

In the Pacific, the main objects of Imperial Defence are to keep the sea routes open to enable reinforcements to go to the aid of Australia and New Zealand or from these Dominions to other parts of the Empire, if their respective governments should so decide, and to safeguard British interests in the Far East—chiefly in China. Unquestionably the most important requisite is the maintenance of an adequately defended and appropriately organized naval and air base at Singapore. It is unfortunate that this strategic outpost is some 8,000 miles distant from England, and over 5,000 miles from the Mediterranean, where a powerful British fleet is maintained, and that it can be reached from Australia only through one or other of half a dozen narrow straits which are very vulnerable to attack either from the air or by submarines. As it is not too much to say that its loss would have a decisive effect in a war waged in the Far East, it is all the more necessary to make every possible provision against this contingency.

To the north-east of Singapore and at a distance of nearly 1,500 miles from it lies Hong Kong, the most easterly defended fortress of the British Empire, apart from the eastern harbours of Australia and those of New Zealand. Hong Kong, which for many years and during the life of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was rated in a scale of importance higher than Singapore, must now be providing considerable food for thought for those who are responsible for defining Imperial strategy. Its original value lay in the protection which it provided for the Far Eastern trade, and to this day it provides, in its garrison, a reservoir from which troops can be, and have been, drawn to protect British nationals in North China. For the North China Squadron it provides a defended port and sheltered anchorage together with the repair facilities of a dockyard. It suffers, however, from the disadvantage that it is much too near Japan and its dependencies; indeed it is within the range of air attack based on Formosa. It also has but a shallow hinterland, abutting on the mainland of China, and is thus peculiarly open to attack from the land. Anxiety regarding its defence has been much increased since Japan entered upon a large-scale invasion of China, and the connected problems have assumed an entirely new complexion. This is not the place in which to discuss them, but so long as it is British policy to protect British trade in China, the defence of Hong Kong remains a cardinal point in that policy.

The foregoing analysis of the four chief maritime areas of the world in their relation to Imperial Defence leads one to the

conclusion that free communication over all, with the possible exception of the Mediterranean, is vital both to the security of the British Isles and to the strategic principle of mutual support between the various countries of the Empire. That the value of this latter principle varies according to the geographical position of these countries and their liability to be involved in war cannot be denied ; the principle must, however, from the broad point of view, be accepted as axiomatic. But from this principle there obviously emerges another, and that is, that each country or locality must, either from its own resources or with assistance from the United Kingdom, be able to arrange for its own defence until such time as help can be sent from the nearest country capable of rendering it.

The British system of Imperial Defence is, therefore, based on the following foundations :

(a) The defence of the British Isles from every likely form of attack must be assured.

(b) The self-governing Dominions must shoulder, and indeed have accepted, the responsibility for their own defence until such time as reinforcements can reach them from other parts of the Commonwealth.

(c) India, with the help of the British elements of the army and the Royal Air Force in India, is responsible for her own defence.

(d) The Colonies, fortresses, and protectorates are held by British regular garrisons, in some cases reinforced by regular native troops or by colonial volunteer forces, and in other cases protected by native troops alone.

(e) The Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force must keep the sea communications of the Empire open.

(f) An Imperial Reserve, in the form of a military field force and air forces, must be available to send as a reinforcement to any threatened point.

### *Political Factors*

The framing of a defence policy must be based upon the relationships which exist between the nations of the Empire and those other countries with whom there is, or may be, some reasonable fear of disagreement which may lead to open conflict. It is not, however, easy to frame a policy to satisfy both the United Kingdom and the Dominions : Great Britain cannot divest herself of her European commitments, and yet, as the centre of an association of self-governing nations, she has to endeavour to harmonize her policy with Canada (who is in no immediate

danger of attack), with the Union of South Africa, whose main preoccupation is the native problem (intensified as it undoubtedly is by recent Italian expansion in North Africa), and with Australia and New Zealand, who are apprehensive of the ambitions of Japan. India and the Crown Colonies, especially those in Africa, have their own internal problems, and (apart from India) the military forces which they maintain are very small in number and designed chiefly for the purposes of internal security. In the event of war, the Colonies rely almost entirely on military help from Great Britain.

It is a commonplace in international affairs to-day that the greatest of British interests is peace. Great Britain has taken the lead ever since the Great War in the pursuit of this ideal as a world policy ; but, since 1919, the division of the great Powers into two groups of victors and vanquished, and the continuance of an attitude of domination of the former over the latter by certain Powers, has resulted in a successful revolt against the position of inferiority imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. So far as Great Britain was concerned, this policy of the pursuit of peace has been associated with a progressive reduction of her armaments which was intended to give a lead (which was never followed) to those nations whose armaments had not been restricted by the various Peace Treaties which ended the Great War. The inability of the well-armed nations to follow Great Britain's lead led inevitably to the rearmament of those nations, especially Germany, who, not unnaturally, refused to be bound any longer by restrictions which left them militarily helpless in the presence of heavily-armed neighbours. Great Britain has to face to-day a world in which the ideal of disarmament is, for the time being, dead ; with the rearmament of Germany and the declared objects of German policy the only course open to her during the past three or four years has been to make up the military leeway.

In Europe <sup>1</sup> Great Britain's policy is still governed by the three main principles which have determined it for the past three centuries, viz. :

(i) Naval supremacy in the North Sea and the English Channel.

(ii) The maintenance of the independence of the Low Countries.

(iii) The prevention of the achievement of such a hegemony by any great European Power as would ultimately threaten Great Britain.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 4 above.

The maintenance of these principles is seriously affected by the rise of the great dictatorships in Europe, and by the Civil War in Spain, the eventual effects of which are to-day a source of anxious surmise and may well materialize into a grave menace to Great Britain's interests in the Mediterranean.

The loss of immunity from bombardment, the inevitable sequel to the rise of air power, has deprived Great Britain of part of that insular security which she has enjoyed for centuries. The declared policy of the Nazi régime in Germany and the immense growth of the German air forces have placed the question of Home Defence in a position of priority among Great Britain's military problems. Moreover, in the Mediterranean the events of 1935-36 have caused real apprehension as to the possibility of keeping that sea open to British shipping in the event of a war with Italy. The nakedness to attack from the air of Malta would render it impossible to maintain as a fleet base. Gibraltar would be equally vulnerable to an enemy who had the use of Spanish territory. Whilst the vulnerability of Malta might to some extent be compensated by the development of Cyprus as an alternative naval and air base, the political situation in the Mediterranean may demand the serious consideration of the alternative route from the United Kingdom to the East round the Cape of Good Hope, until such time as the security of the shorter route through the Suez Canal can be assured.

In the Near East Great Britain has treaty commitments with both Egypt and 'Iraq, and she has promised to come to the help of these countries if attacked, a contingency which events in recent years have shown to be by no means impossible.

In India and Ceylon the defended ports have assumed an increased importance since the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the adoption by Japan of an expansionist policy in the Far East. So far as India is concerned, invasion from the north-west is the main external problem. For the moment, the subjugation of the tribes on the Indian side of the Durand Line is the chief preoccupation of the government of that country. Nevertheless, India has several times been invaded across that frontier, and the Russian menace, for the moment dormant, loomed large at a period when air power was undreamt of and land communications presented physical difficulties to the invader which were considerably greater than they would be to-day. Moreover, it would be quite possible without actual invasion to stir the frontier tribes into open rebellion by means of an intensive propaganda campaign employing aircraft to drop subversive literature from the air. The possible recrudescence of this danger must not be overlooked, and the reinforcement of the

Army and Royal Air Force in India will require the same freedom of communication between that country and the rest of the Empire as is essential to meet other, and possibly more immediate, liabilities in the Pacific Ocean.

In the Far East, while any improvement in Japan's economic position may benefit Australia and New Zealand, Japanese expansion into Manchuria and her present campaign against China are a direct threat to British interests in the Pacific. By her policy of expansion on the mainland of Asia Japan seeks national security, increased wealth, prestige and power, as well as the means of supporting a rapidly increasing population. In pursuit of this policy she endeavours to establish political control over vast areas and, where this has been accomplished, foreign enterprise is excluded and trade and industrial development are rigidly controlled in the interests of Japanese economy. While Japanese energies are absorbed in the endeavour to assimilate China to Manchuria, aggression in other directions would seem to be out of the question, but, should she succeed in her attempt to dominate China, further expansion southwards might well be the next item on her programme. The realization of this danger has undoubtedly influenced the attitude of Australia, New Zealand and India towards the question of co-operation for defence in the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> In this connexion the approaching completion of the defence of the Singapore Naval Base is one of the most satisfactory features in the situation to-day.

In the Far East, however, as in the Mediterranean, a forecast of the eventual situation is difficult to make. Much depends on the final result of the hostilities between China and Japan, which cannot yet be estimated. China has proved a harder nut to crack than anyone anticipated. The campaign has already made a heavy drain on Japanese resources, and, even in the event of complete success, the exploitation of her victory is likely to engross Japan for a long time to come. In view of this experience she may well hesitate to involve herself in the hazards of a war with one or more of the Western Powers, particularly in view of its incalculable effect on the attitude of the United States, which has recently shown signs of stiffening.

The traditional attitude of the United States is one of aloofness from European politics. But recent events in China and Europe have undoubtedly impressed the rulers of America with the necessity of adequate fleets both in the Pacific and in the Atlantic, as witness the building programme now before Congress.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Imperial Conference, 1937, *Summary of the Proceedings*, Cmd. 5482, pp. 16-20.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times*, January 6, 1939.



It is difficult to visualize circumstances which would bring Great Britain or the Dominions into conflict with the United States ; indeed, Canadian sentiment, as interpreted by Mr. Ian Mackenzie in his speech to the House of Commons in Ottawa on March 24, 1938,<sup>1</sup> seems to accept it as axiomatic that the American as well as the British navies are Canada's safeguard in the Pacific. He is reported as having said, ' I think it reasonable to assume that in a major conflagration we should have friendly fleets upon the Pacific Ocean and that the severity of raids upon our western seaboard would be limited by the strength and position of these friendly fleets '.

*The Interests of the Various Countries of the Empire and their Attitudes*

The attitude towards Imperial Defence of the Dominions—who attained self-government during a period when the idea that the Royal Navy could cease to command the seas was unthinkable—is based on their right to decide, each for itself, the extent, if any, of military assistance that will be afforded to the common cause when the occasion of war arises. The uncertainty, therefore, as to the action of any particular Dominion in emergency must leave some doubt as to the reliability of any plans that may be concerted beforehand.

On the other hand, each Dominion has accepted the principle of arranging for its own local defence and the emphasis laid on this principle tends to obscure the fact that local defence is not always the best defence. Indeed, it is not unlikely that the safety of a Dominion might, as in 1914, be decided, not locally, but on battle-grounds or on the seas many thousands of miles away. While there is reason to believe that this principle is not overlooked in some of the Dominions, the fact remains that as yet no Dominion maintains any land or even air contingents ready for immediate service abroad, and co-operation in this sphere, therefore, would, if given at all, be tardy. Australia and New Zealand, however, possess naval forces of some importance.

Apart from the above naval forces, collaboration is exemplified by the provision of defended naval bases and ports, and by the acceptance of the principle of uniformity in organization, in the technique of defence, and in similarity of weapons and types of munitions used by the fighting services. Moreover, there is a certain amount of collaboration with the Committee of Imperial Defence and also an accepted system of interchange of officers, including the allotment of vacancies at the staff colleges, and other educational establishments to Dominion officers. This ensures a

<sup>1</sup> Canadian House of Commons Debate, March 24, 1938, p. 1793.

similarity of military doctrine and assists in the mutual understanding of each other's problems. As shown in 1914-18, the potentialities of co-operation by the Dominions are immense, but the weaknesses of the system are obvious. They are not, perhaps, very acute since Great Britain shoulders the bulk of the responsibility. Admittedly there is nothing very altruistic in this, for even if the Dominions were no longer part of the Commonwealth, Great Britain would still have world-wide interests with four hundred million people and six million square miles of territory to defend. Moreover, there is little doubt that the rest of the civilized world regard the British Empire as indivisible, and consider that war with one portion of it means war against the whole. A Dominion, therefore, which might not wish to co-operate, might well find itself embroiled whether it liked it or not.

So far as Great Britain is concerned, her first preoccupation is the security of the British Isles. This involves the provision of local defences on a considerable scale ; but even this does not compare with the immense expenditure of naval, military, and air effort which is necessary to keep the sea routes open both for trade and for oversea defence purposes. It is this great effort which is the first step towards ensuring the security of the Dominions ; for it keeps the trade routes open, protects Dominion shipping and makes possible the despatch of reinforcements to threatened areas. Whilst these reinforcements would almost certainly be required for areas already under British protection, account must be taken of the possibility of having to send them to implement guarantees under various treaties such as those with Egypt and 'Iraq, or even for the discharge of British obligations in Europe.

The attitude of the Dominions towards co-operation in defence necessarily varies with the degree of danger to which each considers itself to be subject in war. Into the assessment of this danger there enter both geographical and political factors. The former must take into consideration the proximity or otherwise of potentially hostile nations, whilst the latter must be influenced by the likelihood of international differences arising which would affect them.

Whilst Australia and New Zealand have always realized the weakness of their position in the Pacific, the recent aggressive attitude of Japan has acted as a strong incentive towards their taking a greater share in Imperial Defence. At the Imperial Conference of 1937 it became apparent that these two Dominions were anxious to go much further than were the others in concerting measures for co-operating in the defence of communications and other common interests. For instance, the relation of the Royal Australian Navy to the Royal Navy in the event of war in

the Pacific was clarified and New Zealand informed the Conference that His Majesty's Government in that country attached the greatest importance to close co-operation in defence matters, and made particular reference to the value which they attached to the Singapore base. Mr. Lyons, the late Prime Minister of Australia, in a broadcast on March 24, 1938, declared that recent events had indicated the need for greater preparedness for defence.<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the Union of South Africa is doubtless based on the absence of any great Power owning territory south of the Equator, which engenders a feeling of security that it is hard to dispute. Whilst the defence of the British Isles is not unnaturally considered to be outside the purview of the Union, Mr. Pirow has stated that so long as England wanted a naval base at Simons-town, South Africa would co-operate to defend it. The real background of her defence problem is the peculiar position of the Union of South Africa. There is a distinct difference between the territories north of the Sahara, where European interests are paramount and the Union has none, and the territories south of the Sahara, where white races are making a permanent home of which the Union must act as guardian.

Canada's attitude seems to be based on the idea that the defence of a country is a political rather than a military problem and that it is more profitable to maintain good relations with other countries so as to avoid conflicts, if possible, and to settle those that arise before they reach the stage of war. It must, however, be pointed out that Canada has not yet developed her machinery for the conduct of international affairs to the same point as have other independent nations : indeed, she has diplomatic representatives in three foreign countries only, viz., the United States, Japan and France. Canadian relations with other States are conducted through the British Foreign Office and Consular channels. The neutrality of Canada may not, therefore, be recognized by a belligerent who declares war on Great Britain. The problem of military defence for Canada is a particularly simple one, in so far as the defence of Canadian territory is concerned. Her geographical situation is such that she is vulnerable to the United States alone—so long as the Royal Navy retains command of the sea ; and invasion by the United States is regarded as being as unlikely as would be invasion by Great Britain. The feeling of security engendered by the thought that an invader must first cross three thousand miles of Atlantic or over four thousand miles of Pacific Ocean no doubt contributes to a large extent to the attitude of aloofness from active co-operation in Imperial defence, which has for some years prevented the Canadian

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, March 25, 1938.

representative in London from attending the meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Mr. Ian Mackenzie,<sup>1</sup> when reviewing Canadian defence policy at Ottawa on March 24, 1938, reaffirmed the principles of the Canadian government's policy as being based on the right of each partner in the Commonwealth to take its own decision about military action in the event of war. After reviewing the five different schools of thought in Canada about defence policy, he implied that the one which found favour with his government was that which believed that there should be no automatic commitments about military action or neutrality. At the end of his speech Mr. Ian Mackenzie stated that, for the defence of the Atlantic coast, Canada must rely on the British fleet, and in regard to the Pacific, co-operation with the American navy was counted on.

The character and structure of the defence force of Eire are those of a professional army like the British and not of a civic force like the militias of the other Dominions. It may be employed anywhere within Irish territory both against an external enemy and for the prevention of internal disorder. There are no parliamentary provisions for its employment oversea, and it is essentially a home defence force. Ireland is, however, of great strategic importance to the United Kingdom and it is essential to British security that an enemy should not be able to use it as an air or naval base. This military importance was recognized in 1921 by the inclusion in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of provision for the maintenance of British garrisons and coast defences at certain naval ports in the Free State until such time as that country was in a position to undertake its own coastal defence. That time is now adjudged to have arrived, and, under the Agreement between the Governments of Great Britain and Ireland dated April 28, 1938, those provisions of the Treaty of December 6, 1921, which dealt with the defence of naval bases in the Irish Free State were to cease to have effect as from December 31, 1938, when these bases and their defences would be handed over to the Irish government.<sup>2</sup> It will be remembered that Mr. de Valera gave a solemn assurance that the territory of the Free State would never be permitted to be used as a base of attack upon Great Britain.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Canadian House of Commons Debate, March 24, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> It was announced in *The Times*, May 30, 1938, that arrangements had been agreed upon between officials of Eire and the United Kingdom for the formal transfer of the defences of Cork Harbour to the Irish government on July 11, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> In Dail Eireann, May 29, 1935. Speaking on the Estimates for Defence laid before the Dail in February, 1939, Mr. de Valera said that it would be impossible for Ireland to remain neutral in the event of war between Great Britain and any other country, since the latter would consider it essential to cut off Irish supplies to England by bombing Irish ports (see *Dail Debates*, Vol. 74, cols. 719-20).

*General*

A study of the foregoing paragraphs indicates that, however varied may be the interests of the several countries of the Empire in the problem of defence, there is one point on which there is unanimity amongst the Dominions, and that is, that each claims the right to be the sole judge of the extent, if any, to which it will participate in an Imperial war. It is obvious, therefore, that the preparation of concerted plans by the Committee of Imperial Defence presents very serious difficulties, since the extent of Dominion participation remains indeterminate. Without elaborating this point one must consider at least two aspects which are fundamental, first, the question of treaties for the limitation of naval or other armament and, second, the question of neutrality.

So far, naval armaments alone have been subjected to limitation; in negotiating these treaties the naval forces of the Dominions have always been included in the quotas claimed for the Royal Navy. As Great Britain cannot count unreservedly on the availability of the Dominions' ships in time of war, the bases upon which comparative strengths have been agreed with the other parties to those treaties are not entirely sound.

The second consideration may also lead to the invalidation of certain plans that are drawn up by the Committee of Imperial Defence. The distribution of the Fleet to meet certain eventualities undoubtedly depends upon the availability at the time of naval bases such as Halifax, Esquimalt and Simonstown. Could the Dominions concerned make these bases available and at the same time adopt an attitude of neutrality on other matters? Any enforcement by them of strict neutrality would logically lead to a refusal to make these bases available to the ships of the Royal Navy, and so to the invalidation of plans which had been based on their possible use by Great Britain.

## INDIA'S SPECIAL PROBLEMS

*(a) Geographical and Political Factors*

Whatever changes there may be in the direction of affairs generally and of defence in particular under the new Constitution, the military liability implicit in the phrase 'Defence of India' remains unchanged, and the component factors which compose the problem of defence still remain constant. Federal India will continue to be a continent covering an area of some 1,575,000 square miles, and as large as the continent of Europe omitting Russia. Her population is now some 342,000,000 and is on the increase. Her frontiers extend for thousands of miles, of which



the absolute custody of some 550 miles is vital to her very existence. Across this frontier lies the kingdom of Afghanistan, whose territories form a buffer State between Russia and British India. It is through these territories that all the historic invasions of India have taken place. Whilst there has been no such invasion during the period of British rule in India, nevertheless there have been three Indo-Afghan wars during the past century, the most recent and shortest one having taken place in 1919. Along this frontier, too, live the semi-independent tribes such as the Mohmands, Afridis, Wazirs and Mahsuds, who, though they are nominally under British administration, have never been effectually controlled, and have been a constant menace to the administered Indian districts which march with them. India now boasts of some 38,000 miles of railways, of which 4,000 miles are essential communications in the event of war. In India itself the state of communal tension persists, while on the frontier the transition from a state of peace to a state of war and back again to peace is generally fortuitous but always amazingly rapid. The Indian coastline is over 7,000 miles long, the defence of which really lies in the British naval control of the keys to the Indian Ocean, namely, the Suez Canal, the Straits of Malacca and the Cape of Good Hope.

#### (b) The Military Liability

The primary function of India's defence forces is the discharge of India's domestic military liability, which comprises local naval defence, security from invasion and the maintenance of the equilibrium on the north-western and north-eastern frontiers, and the maintenance of law and order in India itself in support of the civil power. *Prima facie* this is a purely Indian liability to be discharged by the forces and resources which are maintained from Indian revenues. It is usually referred to as the 'minor danger' and the liability is limited to dealing with acts of aggression by a single neighbouring State, to the quelling of tribal disturbance and tribal incursions into administered territory, and to action in aid of the civil power.

With the separation of Burma as an independent entity the liability for the protection of the north-eastern frontier will, in the first instance, devolve on the Burma Defence Force, with the other forces of the Empire, including notably the Army in India, ready to support that force should the necessity arise. It will be seen that India's defence problems differ materially from those of the Dominions and necessitate the maintenance of a comparatively large standing army to deal with potential dangers which are ever present and call for immediate military action when they materialize.

(c) Defence Forces and Supply

India's Defence forces, which are usually loosely referred to as the Army in India, comprise :

The Royal Indian Navy, consisting of 5 sloops, 1 patrol vessel, 1 survey ship, and 1 depot ship.

The Royal Air Force, consisting of 8 squadrons with an aircraft park and depot, and with aircraft suitable only for India's particular needs.

The Army, consisting of some 55,000 British and 140,000 Indian regulars.<sup>1</sup> These are organized into three interchangeable categories, namely, the Covering Troops, of a strength of approximately two divisions for watch and ward duties on the North-West Frontier, distributed between Chitral and Quetta, with the preponderating force between Peshawar and Waziristan ; a Field Army of four divisions ; and Internal Security troops dispersed throughout India to assist the civil power. In addition, India maintains an Auxiliary Force and an Indian Territorial Force as second line troops in reserve ; the former is composed of British and Anglo-Indian volunteers, the latter is entirely Indian.

A certain number of the Indian States also maintain State forces from within their own revenues, some of which would be available for general defence purposes in the event of an emergency.

While adhering in the main to the broad principles underlying the organization of the armed forces in Britain, several minor differences occur in respect of the strengths, composition, armament, and equipment both of formations and of units, all of which are adapted to suit the terrain, the character of the enemy, and the seat of attack implicit in the ' minor danger '. In fact, the army may be said to be organized, armed, and equipped for a particular campaign and for a particular type of warfare. And herein lie the seeds of contention.

The purist in Great Britain complains of the obsolescence and even obsolescence of the equipment, of the paucity of machines, and of inordinate delay in mechanization. These objections might be both reasonable and valid were the cost of the armed forces in India shared by the British Exchequer. In fact, however, except for a subsidy which amounts to some 3 per cent. only of the cost of the defence forces, Great Britain pays no share, and the Indian taxpayer is left with some 97 per cent. of the cost. This includes a substantial amount known as the Capitation Grant, which is paid annually into the British Exchequer on account of the

<sup>1</sup> It appeared from the Army Estimates issued in March, 1939, that the number of British troops in India had been reduced by approximately 10,000—to a total of 46,942 (see *The Times*, March 2, 1939).

preliminary costs connected with the recruiting and training of British soldiers before they are drafted to India.

The conflict between what may be termed the Imperial aspect and the Indian aspect is embarrassing to the military hierarchy in India who, though brought up to think imperially and to regard the defence of the Empire as a single indivisible problem, find themselves in what is in effect the position of trustees for the Indian taxpayer.

Apart from the financial aspect, the present system under which India is dependent on Great Britain for the annual relief of a quota of her British troops is proving an anomaly by reason of the progress in mechanization of the British Army. India cannot afford, nor does she require, a highly mechanized army. The mountainous nature of the terrain on the North-West Frontier is not at all adapted to the employment of mechanized units other than motor-lorry convoys, and then only when adequate roads have been built. Again, for internal security purposes, the man and his horse rather than the machine or the machine-gun are better adapted to the task of restoring and maintaining order amongst a population whom it is necessary to pacify rather than to kill; it is the display of force rather than its use which is required on these occasions. The number of mechanized units India can usefully employ and consequently receive is limited. Great Britain, on the other hand, is anxious to mechanize as soon as possible, but is prevented from doing so at the pace she would like owing to the large number of British units serving in India. It is, in fact, hardly an exaggeration to say that the pace of mechanization of the British Army is being set by India. In order to remedy this anomaly His Majesty's Government undertook to pay the cost of mechanizing several British units in India in 1937.

Although considerable progress has been and still is being made in the development and expansion of ordnance and other factories, and guns, rifles, ammunition, both gun and small arm, and fuzes can now be produced in limited numbers, India is still dependent to a considerable extent on Great Britain for many of the components of these articles. In the matter of aircraft and motor transport India cannot manufacture *ab initio* and cannot do more than assemble the various parts which have to be imported from overseas. Although plans for expansion in the event of war exist, it is doubtful whether the output even after expansion would suffice to meet all the demands of the forces in the field under modern war conditions, and India would still have to rely to a great extent, in the initial stages at any rate, on overseas sources of supply.

(d) Direction and Control

During the present period of transition, that is to say the period of provincial autonomy but not of full federal government, the responsibility for defence has, for the time being, devolved on the Governor-General in Council under the general control of the Secretary of State. Included in that Council as an executive member and sharing joint responsibility with other members, is the Commander-in-Chief who, as member in charge of the Defence Department, is himself a member of the Council of State.

Once federal government is fully established, responsibility for defence in the spheres of both policy and expenditure will rest with the Governor-General alone in his discretion, subject to the general control of the Secretary of State. The Commander-in-Chief will cease to be a 'member of the government', but will remain in supreme command of all the armed forces, and will be the technical adviser to the Governor-General on questions of strategy, war preparations and the conduct of war. The Governor-General may, in his discretion, appoint a counsellor to assist him in the administration of defence, and to be his mouthpiece in the Legislative Assembly. Defence expenditure will not be subject to the control of the Federal Finance Department, but will be the sole responsibility of the Governor-General assisted by a finance counsellor. The Governor-General will be under an obligation to consult the federal ministers regarding the fixation of the defence budget.

Under the existing system, the Commander-in-Chief, as a Member of Council, is himself present at discussions on major problems of defence policy and expenditure, and, if in disagreement with the conclusions reached, has the right to submit a minute of dissent. In the future the position will be that on questions of administration which may affect the discharge of the Commander-in-Chief's duties, the Governor-General will be charged with the duty of obtaining the views of the Commander-in-Chief and of transmitting these views to the Secretary of State should the Commander-in-Chief so request. The Secretary of State will retain the right of referring questions to the Committee of Imperial Defence at his discretion. In India the Governor-General will be the sole permanent member of the Indian Defence Council with power to co-opt any individual he may desire.

(e) Estimates

The Indian Estimates for 1938 made provision for the expenditure of Rs.466,846,000 on defence, allocated as follows :

Navy . . . . .	Rs.8,895,000
Army . . . . .	Rs.401,065,000
Royal Air Force . . . . .	Rs.21,963,000
Military Engineering Services. . . . .	Rs.34,923,000

The Defence Budget for 1939-40 stood at Rs.4,518 lakhs.<sup>1</sup>

Until last year India paid a small annual contribution to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom towards naval defence, the arrangement being that India undertook responsibility for the protection of her ports, harbours, and coastline generally, while the Royal Navy was responsible for the open seas and for protecting sea communications, the Royal Indian Navy co-operating. This involved a dual rôle being assigned to the Indian navy in war. His Majesty's Government agreed to forgo this contribution on condition that India maintained a sea-going fleet of not less than six modern vessels which would be free to co-operate with the Royal Navy in the defence of India, and would also discharge full responsibility for the local naval defence of Indian ports.

In the matter of air and land forces India continues to pay His Majesty's Government a capitation grant. Recognizing that the defence of India is, in part, an Imperial liability, His Majesty's Government has agreed to pay India a subsidy towards the cost of her defence. His Majesty's Government also pays all charges, including the pay of the troops themselves, connected with the employment of Indian troops ex-India both in peace and in war. For example, His Majesty's Government pays for the Indian troops employed as part of the normal peace garrison of Malaya and Hong Kong, His Majesty's Government also paid for the Indian contingent employed ex-India during the War, and for the Indian contingent employed in Shanghai in 1927.

#### (f) India's Part in Imperial Defence

Aside from the domestic problem, the defence of India may at any time present an Imperial liability consequent on the intrusion of a third or fourth Power which would necessitate defence by land, by sea and by air.

In the matter of land operations the army could and would provide an effective spear-head pending the arrival of reinforcements from overseas, and although the initial objective would have to be limited to the resources available, its action would go far towards easing the ultimate task of the Imperial forces.

In the matter of sea operations India's navy is neither designed

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, March 1, 1939.



nor equipped for offensive action, and the most India could do with her own resources would be to defend the major ports of Karachi, Bombay, Calcutta and Rangoon, and possibly Madras, Cochin, Vizagapatam and Chittagong, and to secure unrestricted ingress to and egress from these ports. The task of clearing the adjacent seas of enemy ships and of keeping open communications with the United Kingdom would be the responsibility of the Royal Navy.

In the matter of air operations the air force maintained by India is organized both as to size and as to equipment for her own particular problem, and would not be capable of dealing with a first-class air Power. As, therefore, in operations on the sea, India would look to Imperial sources for offensive air action.

As in the case of the Dominions, India's liability for Imperial Defence outside India has not been clearly defined. Generally speaking, one may say that in spheres directly affecting the safety of India, say in the zone lying between the Persian Gulf and Singapore, the United Kingdom government could count on the fullest co-operation including the early despatch of contingents of all arms. In spheres farther afield there is no reason to suppose that India, as in the past, would not again in the future lend her forces for Imperial service overseas, provided the situation in India itself permits ; provided also that these forces are not demanded as a right but are made available by mutual consent.

The present position may be summed up as follows :

To discharge her domestic military liability India has to spend some 23 per cent. of her total revenue on defence, and cannot or dare not spend more. The degree of mechanization she can adopt is limited partly by expense and partly by the character of the operations imposed by her liability. This reacts on the British Army and is a brake on the rate of mechanization at home.

Although His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom pays an annual subsidy towards the defence of India, it has, for all practical purposes, no control over the British element in the army in India, though it can constitutionally, in the last resort, requisition India's forces for Imperial purposes.

### *The Evolution of Air Power and its Effects*

The evolution of air power has radically affected the whole structure of Imperial Defence. For many generations the United Kingdom has been immune from actual invasion, and for many decades even the fear of invasion has been absent. Now the heart of the Empire has become, to all intents, its most vulnerable organ.

‘ Strategically, our ability to defend ourselves or to act in concert with other Powers anywhere in the world is qualified by our weakness at our most vulnerable point. Politically, our influence for world peace is at a minimum when we dare not run risks through our unpreparedness against the weapon that every civilian dreads most ’.<sup>1</sup>

In the past, shielded by her navy, Great Britain has had the comfortable consciousness that she was able to some extent to play for time and to mobilize in comparative leisure the military and industrial power of the Empire, so that she gained the reputation of always winning the last battle. Now the air weapon has made the world small, and has telescoped military time. Great Britain is no longer in the advantageous position of being, as it were, a ‘ ring-side spectator ’, able to choose his own time if he wished to intervene in the fight that was going on. In war she would be, in fact, fighting immediately for the safety of the hub of the Empire from the moment that war broke out. She will have no time to prepare herself and to intervene only when she is ready. It is the first battle as well as the last, which she will have to win, so that she cannot afford to be unready with her defences, active or passive. She has to change an attitude of potential capacity for action to one of instant readiness.

Nevertheless, provided that Great Britain succeeds, as she would when her defensive preparations are complete, in shattering the initial air attack on these islands, her traditional staying-power and the weapon of blockade, where applicable, should in the long run prove as decisive as in the past. In combination with adequate air defences these factors provide two of the main deterrents to an aggressor. Moreover, Great Britain would adopt a strategic offensive in the air. The advent of air power has placed in her hands a potential offensive weapon far exceeding anything she has ever possessed in its power of rapidly inflicting damage on her enemies. A large part of the Continent is within range of bomber aircraft of the latest types based on aerodromes in England. The principal ports of Germany are now liable to such attack. Great industrial regions in Germany and northern Italy, including vital sources of industrial power, are within easy striking distance of aircraft based on French territory. These are important considerations to be borne in mind by an aggressive nation.

It is, however, fairly clear that, until Great Britain feels that she has overcome the threat to her heart or at least reduced it to manageable proportions, she may find it more difficult than in the past to send out forces to protect the overseas Empire—which is

<sup>1</sup> *The Round Table*, March, 1938 : ‘ The Air and the Citizen ’, p. 217.

at some points more liable to attack since the advent of air power. In the past, not only was Great Britain protected from invasion, but her sea communications with the scattered territories of the Empire, although they were temporarily threatened during the Great War by the submarine, were safeguarded by the navy. Now she is threatened, not by a weapon ancillary to land or sea forces, but by a weapon new *sui generis*, involving a reorientation of her previous ideas of Imperial strategy. Even if she were freed from anxiety at home, she might be hard put to it to make the seas safe for her traffic—incoming with necessities to Great Britain, outgoing with men, materials, and munitions to the support of other parts of the Empire. Not only are merchant convoys open to attack from the air, but Great Britain's traditional weapon of blockade (less effective now because of its slowness of action) may be turned against her with a new technique by which merchant vessels might be immobilized in harbour or prevented from entering ports whose wharves and harbour works may, in addition, have been destroyed. That is not to say that the air threat is the only one to her shipping, but it is a menace added to that of the submarine (whose effectiveness her air defence would tend, however, to reduce), and it is a danger which grows daily with the increasing strength, size and range of attacking aircraft. The records of the last war showed that over 90 per cent. of the submarine sinkings were in the narrow seas or within a hundred miles of the coasts of her territories. Aircraft to-day can cover with safety vast stretches of water, and, in days when flying-boats are capable of crossing the Atlantic, the increasing danger to shipping which enemy air attack might create must be admitted.

Whatever the ultimate power of intervention to assist other parts of the Empire may be, whether with field forces under naval protection or with air forces passing over the airways of the world, it is extremely doubtful whether anything could be spared from the home area in the first stages of the conflict.

‘ Compared with the present state of flux, it was simple to make military calculations in the past. The elements of strength were to a great extent calculable. To embark on war then was no greater hazard than that of betting on the favourite, and yet the favourite has often lost. To-day it is like backing a horse that has never run, and whose breeding even is unknown. . . . The uncertainty which exists as to the actual state of the various national forces is nothing to the uncertainty which prevails as to their effect ’.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *Europe in Arms* (London, 1937), p. 20.

The most that can be hoped for is that, with the increasing power of aircraft to pass from point to point rapidly, British air units in the Middle and Far East, from Egypt to Singapore, may be looked upon as one whole capable of reinforcing the points where the threat is greatest. Thus it is possible that some units from the Eastern group might be available for the reinforcement of Australia and New Zealand if these were in the greatest danger ; but in general it does appear as though, with the advent of air power, it will be necessary for the Dominions to rely much more fully on their own resources in the early stages of any conflict.

On the other hand, the local defence problems of the Dominions have in many cases been lightened by the advent of air power. For example, while sea power remains Australia's first line of defence, her long coastline is much more easily patrolled, and defended against raids, by air forces than by land forces alone. Invasion involving the maintenance of long lines of sea communications is not at any time attractive, but in face of a defending air force it would be still less so. Similarly, raiding attacks like those carried out by hostile cruisers in the 1914-18 war will be unattractive when it is clear that the attacker can be followed out to sea, not by the shells of a coast defence artillery with a range of perhaps 30,000 yards, but by bombing aircraft up to twenty times that distance. Further, civil aviation supplies, to a considerable extent, the basis upon which air power can be built up. Civil aviation provides a reserve of trained pilots ; its ground organization would be valuable in time of war, and could be expanded for military needs ; and the factories which build aircraft and make spares would provide the nucleus for the development of the war-time industry. This aspect of civil aviation is of particular importance to the Dominions, since the vastness of their territories and the lack of other communications in some regions make the development of civil air services desirable in any case, and help towards the provision of air power, which might otherwise be an uneconomic and purely military charge. While Great Britain is a terminus of air lines, the Dominions are natural fields for their development. In short, the Dominions must pay great attention to air power if they are to hold out, as they may have to hold out, for long periods before relief can come from Great Britain.

Since air power has encouraged the doctrine of attack on civil, in substitution of the traditional military, objectives, it involves an entirely new, and much wider, conception of war. This has led to what has aptly been called ' political witchcraft '—an attempt to exorcise war by laying its newest weapons under interdict. It was announced in the House of Commons in February, 1938, that the Government had set on foot an expert inquiry with a view

to reopening with other Powers the question of a general international agreement to prevent or restrict air bombing of civilians.<sup>1</sup> Experience of similar attempts in the past has not been encouraging. The practical and technical difficulties were explored in 1922-3, but no convention was adopted. The difficulties are obvious; for instance, a convention to limit bombing to military objectives cannot legislate for mishits, and a convention arrived at bilaterally, and not generalized, would only divert the menace to potential allies.

### *Imperial Air Routes and their Problems*

A consideration of the maintenance of Imperial air communications brings out with renewed emphasis all Great Britain's historic problems connected with the protection and reinforcement of, and uninterrupted communication with, the territories of a world Empire. A glance at the air routes now in commercial operation quickly makes this apparent. The two great Imperial Airways routes are to India and thence to Australia, and to the Cape. The first route lies along the Mediterranean to Alexandria; thence the Eastern service goes across 'Iraq to the Persian Gulf, and so to Karachi, continuing on the east of India to Singapore, and through Netherlands India to Australia. The second route, which follows the first as far as Egypt, goes up the Nile Valley and south down the east side of Africa.

Even a superficial analysis of the routes makes a number of problems apparent. The stages as far as Alexandria are across France to Marseilles (619 miles from Southampton), thence to Rome (989 miles); across Italy to Brindisi (1,303 miles), thence to Athens (1,672 miles), and to Alexandria (2,259 miles). Thus two of these stages are mainly across the territory of foreign sovereign States, and the Brindisi-Athens stage cannot avoid crossing Greek territory. None of these five stops is on British territory although interests in Egypt are secured by the Treaty of 1936.<sup>2</sup> Alexandria is of first importance as a junction where the main African service branches off, and it is also the junction for land-plane services to Baghdad and Lydda.

From Alexandria the route to India and Singapore is by Tiberias and Habbaniyah ('Iraq) to Basra (3,396 miles from Southampton), and thence by Bahrein, Dabai (Oman), and Gwador (Baluchistan) to Karachi (4,780 miles). Indian Transcontinental Airways combine with Imperial Airways to serve different parts of India, and the main route goes to Calcutta, Bangkok (on Siamese territory), which is the junction for the land-plane service to Hong Kong,

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 331, col. 340.

<sup>2</sup> For details see p. 119 above.



and thence to Singapore (8,166 miles from Southampton). Thence a land-plane service goes via Rambang (Netherlands India) to Darwin and Brisbane. The stage from Singapore to Darwin is 2,283 miles, much of it (more than 1,200 miles) over Netherlands India.<sup>1</sup>

Since the possibility of the continued operation of air routes in wartime depends directly on the safety of their landing-places and ground organization, the support of Great Britain's allies in the Near and Middle East and her ability to reinforce them is an important consideration in the recent controversy on the possibility of keeping her navy in the Mediterranean in face of hostile action. In Europe as well as in the Singapore-Darwin sector, she is largely dependent for facilities upon the goodwill of foreign Powers. The terminal position of Great Britain, at the end of the great air lines of communication of Europe, Asia, and Africa, is a bad one strategically. Her air routes to the East and the Cape inevitably cross France, Italy, Greece and Egypt, if they are to go the most direct way. Imperial air routes are thus affected, not only by actual fighting considerations *vis-à-vis* the strength and situation of an enemy or enemies, but also by considerations of neutrality. The experience of the Great War, as well as subsequent declarations, makes it clear that neutral nations will never give permission for the passage over their territories of the military aircraft of combatant Powers ; this attitude can only be disregarded at the risk of bringing them in on the enemy side or of having to coerce them. Twenty-nine countries are parties to the 1919 Convention which permits freedom of innocent passage over the territory of other members ; but a number of important States are not members. Great Britain has negotiated reciprocal free passage agreements with Italy and Greece. An example of the embarrassment which she can easily suffer was the case of Iran, which, in 1932, refused to renew her agreement with Great Britain, and necessitated a change of the route to go via Bahrein and Oman.<sup>2</sup> It is quite possible also that, since all nations claim sovereignty of the air above their countries and only allow passage subject to their consent, for fear of embroilment they will refuse passage in wartime even to the civil aircraft of combatant nations.

As the years pass the citizens of a scattered Empire become increasingly used to and increasingly dependent on the facilities for rapid travel and communication which airways afford ; it will therefore be progressively more difficult to do without such facilities, which in time of war would be more urgently necessary than ever. Air routes, moreover, have a great and growing

<sup>1</sup> Details of the African route are given on pp. 184-6 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 162 above.

strategic aspect as the highways by which it is possible to transfer the great strength of air power rapidly to intervene at distant points. The value of this in a Commonwealth whose interests are so widespread and may be vulnerable in any part of the world has always been emphasized by the advocates of air power ; but it is only lately, with the increasing range and carrying power of aircraft, that the power of transference has actually materialized. The passage last year of a flight of military aeroplanes from Alexandria to Dhibban (near Baghdad), in three and a quarter hours from take-off to touch-down, and the non-stop record set up by the Royal Air Force flight from Ismailia to Darwin in just over forty-eight hours<sup>1</sup>, are examples of what is becoming increasingly possible year by year, and indications of how serious it would be to allow air communications to be cut, whether by enemy or neutral action. The limiting factor to this power of transference is the need for adequate and defended ground organization for the aircraft operating—landing facilities, stores and spare parts, replenishments of ammunition and repair staff. Thus the air squadrons taking part in the patrol under the arrangements made at Nyon in the autumn of 1937 had to have the support of H.M.S. *Cyclops* at their base.

As far as enemy action is concerned, the air is so large a medium that interception is very difficult ; an enemy air power flanking a strategic airline would presumably attempt to destroy the facilities at the landing-places, or to fight aircraft in the air at focal points, rather than to try to intercept their opponents on the broad airways of the sky. The protection of air routes becomes therefore a question largely of the protection of the stopping-places, and this is a matter of general air superiority. It would be extremely difficult, for example, to control the passage of the air over the Mediterranean in the face of hostile Continental Powers until Great Britain was secure at home and in a position to carry on an air offensive against such Powers. But general superiority in the air cannot secure a passage across stretches of neutral territory. Great Britain must either have allies strategically so situated that her air routes can cross their territories, or else these must be so planned as to avoid passage over potentially neutral as well as hostile countries.

This latter problem is one chiefly affecting routes in Europe. From the Near East onwards Great Britain's strategic airlines, except over the Netherlands India, can cross the lands of minor Eastern Powers who are on terms of friendliness, or in actual alliance, with her and are unlikely to embarrass the passage of her aircraft. But from England to the Near East the problem is acute,

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, November 8, 1938.

and can only be evaded by flying over the sea and abandoning the present route of Imperial Airways. The possible route is from England to Gibraltar, and thence via Malta to the Near East, or alternatively across Africa. This would be comparable to diverting shipping to India from the Mediterranean to the Cape route, but it must be taken in hand.

## Military Forces and Expenditure

*The Rôle, Strength, and Distribution of the Royal Navy*

EVERY day 50,000 tons of food and 110,000 tons of merchandise has to enter the United Kingdom if the daily bread of its population is not to be interrupted or its daily work disorganized. In order to maintain this flow of imports, a corresponding quantity of exports must also be transported. Both these streams are carried by sea and cannot be carried otherwise. It is the function of the Royal Navy to ensure these two streams are maintained, without serious diminution, in the face of any enemy's attempt to interrupt them. This, then, is the chief rôle of the Royal Navy, and this it is which dictates its strength and its distribution. It amounts to the provision of full protection to British sea communications ; and it is to be noted that those obviously include both free intercommunication with the Empire, and the transport, wherever needed, of armed forces, land or air, overseas. Of air forces, the machines themselves can of course fly to their area of operations nowadays ; but the men and elaborate equipment on the ground, without which an air squadron cannot operate, can move no faster than they can be transported by sea. The Navy has also another rôle. In addition to protecting British sea communications, it is its function to deny the use of sea communications to an enemy. A navy adequate to the first of these rôles will be fully competent to fulfil the other.

The factors which determine naval strength are two. One is the volume and distribution of British trade which is to be protected. Sea-borne supplies are liable to interruption at any point of the voyage from their origin to their destination. Supplies of grain to the United Kingdom, for instance, could be interrupted off the mouth of the River St. Lawrence, off Sandy Hook, or the River Plate, as well as in the English Channel. Merchant vessels bringing supplies are liable to capture or destruction by any armed ship of an enemy, whether a ship of war or a merchant ship converted for that purpose, at any point in their voyage. It is thus necessary for the British navy to provide protection for the merchant ships bringing supplies in all seas traversed by the latter, to an extent in different areas which varies according to the particular enemy of the moment.

A merchant ship could be armed and fitted out for commerce

raiding by any enemy possessing a seaboard. Even against the weakest of enemies it is therefore necessary for the British navy to provide some measure of protection for British trade in all seas traversed by that trade. There is thus a minimum below which the necessities of defence dictate that the strength of the British navy shall not fall ; the minimum strength which is determined by the volume and distribution of British trade, no matter who or how weak at sea the supposed enemy may be.

The degree of defence to be provided is governed by the nature of the possible attacker. If armed merchant-ship raiders were the only possible surface enemy, they could be countered by similar merchant ships, though of course much more effectively by men-of-war ; even the smaller and older men-of-war, which would be regarded as superseded by the more modern ships of foreign Powers, would be more than a match for the most powerful of armed merchant ships. The point to note is that, since even the closest blockade of an enemy's coast cannot make absolutely certain of preventing all possible raiders from gaining the high seas, direct protection to British sea-borne trade must be given on the trade routes themselves.

Beyond this minimum strength further strength is needed, determined by the second factor—the naval force possessed by potential enemies. If an enemy possesses cruisers capable of operating on the ocean trade routes, the British navy must possess cruisers of at least similar strength to protect British sea-borne trade against them. If the enemy disposes of submarines, the British navy must possess a sufficiency of anti-submarine craft. If the enemy is in a position to attack British sea-borne trade from the air, anti-aircraft defence must be provided for it in the danger zone. The greater includes the less ; if it is necessary to provide protection against, say, enemy cruisers armed with eight-inch guns, that protection will be fully adequate against the armed merchant-ship raider.

It is this relative factor which brings battle fleets into existence. A concentration of enemy cruisers can be met in one of two ways : by a similar concentration, or by the provision of a smaller force of more powerful ships. There comes a point in the growth of navies where the latter is more efficient and more economical. Hence the battleship. A battle fleet represents a concentration of naval forces irresistible by all lesser craft. Under its cover the lesser naval forces can carry out their rôle of exercising control of sea communications, protecting their own from attack and interrupting those of an enemy. The only method of dealing with such a concentration of force is by a similar concentration held ready to engage it, whenever opportunity may offer, with a view



to destroying it before it can interfere with the operation of control at sea.

The total strength of the Royal Navy is thus determined by the volume of British sea communications to be defended, combined with the necessity for providing a force both of cruising ships and of battleships adequate to deal with the forces possessed by potential enemies. It should always be the aim of the Government of the United Kingdom to maintain the Navy at that standard ; and as ships are continually being built in one or other foreign navy, whereby the march of technical progress continues, that aim can only be properly achieved by a steady programme of replacement of old ships, year by year. That, in the past, was always the policy of the Admiralty.

In the years following the war, however, that policy was abandoned. Great Britain had many more ships than there was need to maintain after the disappearance of the German Navy ; large numbers of them were scrapped. The Washington Treaty in 1922 still further reduced needs, and provided for further scrappings during the period of its currency. The only new cruisers added to the Navy in the first five years after the War were some of those of which the construction was stayed at the Armistice (many of them were scrapped then on the stocks and never completed), nearly all of which were of the small lightly armed class, designed for the special conditions of the North Sea.

In 1924, however, there were already under construction abroad six heavy cruisers armed with eight-inch guns (the largest guns allowed by the Washington Treaty to be mounted in cruisers) and more were projected. This was not exceptional ; it was merely the result of steady replacement in foreign navies, the ideal of all Admiralties. But it meant that relatively the strength of the British navy was declining. For the latter's cruiser force, though still adequate as far as mere numbers were concerned, was composed for the most part of units which were small, armed only with six-inch guns, of endurance inadequate for ocean work, and an undue proportion of which were in the older age groups. Thus, not only had replacement become urgent, but there was a serious shortage of cruisers comparable to those building abroad. Hence the building programme of 1924, of five 10,000-ton cruisers.

That spurt was not maintained, and subsequent cruiser programmes were smaller, with the result that British cruiser strength continued relatively to decline, since old ships were wearing out faster than new ships were being built. (There were various reasons for this decline, which are set forth elsewhere in this book and will not be repeated here.) At the same time, a somewhat

similar process was at work in the battle fleet. Its numbers, too, were fully adequate in a world in which all, or nearly all, the naval Powers were Members of the League of Nations. But the modernization of the armament of its units to enable them to cope with the new developments in air power, and of their defensive equipment for the same purpose, and the supply of anti-aircraft ammunition, were allowed to fall seriously into arrear. Thus it was that by 1934 the strength of the British navy had fallen much below the figure demanded by the standard defined above. The Government of the United Kingdom is now employed in diligently bringing it up to adequate strength.

The distribution in war of the British navy must be, it will be seen, governed also by two considerations. If the enemy possesses a battle fleet, an adequate British battle fleet must be maintained in such a position that the enemy can be brought to action if he puts to sea, before he can interfere with the general control of sea communications by British cruising ships. In addition to that, direct protection must be afforded to British sea communications against attacks by such enemy vessels as are able to reach an attacking position ; i.e. cruisers, smaller ships, aircraft or submarines.

The precise method of affording this protection must depend upon circumstances. It may be that the adoption of a convoy system in certain parts of the world would be the only method of affording adequate protection, as it was against the attacks of German submarines in home waters and in the Mediterranean in 1916-18. But convoy itself has certain serious disadvantages. Ships are kept waiting before they can start their voyages while convoys are assembling, and before they can unload because the arrival of large batches of ships simultaneously, instead of in the accustomed steady stream, congests ports beyond their working capacity. Voyages are longer and slower, because routes must be compromises between those appropriate to different destinations, and the speed of a convoy is that of its slowest ship. The combined effect of all these factors is to reduce the carrying power of a given merchant fleet by a figure which has been estimated as high as 20 per cent. ; so that convoy has in the past been unpopular with shipping, and has had on occasion to be enforced by coercive legislation. It may thus well be that the volume of attack to which British sea-borne trade is subject by any given enemy would not be so great as to make it worth while accepting the loss, disadvantage and delay inherent in the establishment of the convoy system. In the latter event, adequate protection may be given by other means. Admiralty policy in this respect was fully explained in the House of Commons by the Parliamen-

tary Secretary to the Admiralty in introducing the Navy Estimates for 1938, on March 17.<sup>1</sup>

In any case it will be obvious that the measures which should be appropriate in the case of one enemy are not necessarily so in the case of another. It is therefore not possible, unless the conditions which obtained in the years immediately preceding 1914 are reproduced, wherein there was no doubt who the enemy would be in the event of war, to determine in peace precisely what distribution of naval forces will be necessary in the event of war.

This difficulty is not serious. Naval forces are highly mobile; they can be moved from one part of the world to another at a few hours' notice, and can operate for months on end in any area in which a base is available to them. It is necessary, of course, before the end of those months to set up a system of supply and replenishment in the new sphere of operations, in order to enable the naval force to continue working there. Apart from that, however, it can be said definitely that cruising forces will be required in every part of the world in which there is an appreciable density of British sea-borne trade.

The peace distribution of the Royal Navy is, therefore, based on the principle that in every sea is maintained a cruiser squadron, whose duty on the outbreak of war would be to defend British sea-borne trade in its area from sporadic attack. There are for instance 5 cruisers, 1 aircraft carrier, 1 minelayer, 5 sloops, 9 destroyers and 17 submarines on the China station. There are 3 cruisers and a number of sloops in the Indian Ocean; 2 cruisers and 4 sloops on the African station. There are 5 cruisers and 2 sloops on the American station with 4 destroyers of the Royal Canadian Navy. There is the New Zealand division of the Royal Navy (2 cruisers) with 2 sloops in New Zealand. And in Australia there is the Royal Australian Navy consisting of 4 cruisers (of which 1 is in reserve), 1 flotilla leader, 4 destroyers (2 in reserve), and 2 sloops.

Besides all these scattered squadrons there is the battle fleet, which may be required to operate in any one or more parts of the world. One-half of this, consisting of 5 battleships and 3 battle cruisers (some of which are normally under refit and so temporarily out of service), is stationed in home waters, to cover the areas in which the sea routes converge on the United Kingdom. That distribution is partly dictated by the existence of two foreign fleets within a few hours' steaming of those vital positions. The other half of the battle fleet, consisting of 7 battleships (with the same proviso regarding absentees), is stationed in the Mediterranean, covering the first and perhaps the most vulnerable

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 333, cols. 641-3.

stage of imperial communications, which is also within striking distance of Continental fleets.

For purposes of training and the adequate practice of personnel—which are difficult to provide in the conditions of dispersal perforce obtaining in squadrons on foreign stations—for convenience of administration, and in view of probable war dispositions, to each battle fleet are attached aircraft carriers, cruisers, and smaller warships. The Home Fleet thus consists, in addition to the battle fleet, of 2 aircraft carriers, the 2nd Cruiser Squadron of 5 ships, 3 destroyer flotillas, totalling 27 destroyers under a Commodore in a cruiser, and a flotilla of 6 submarines, besides auxiliary and smaller craft. The Mediterranean Fleet, besides the battle squadron, comprises 1 aircraft carrier, the 1st and 3rd Cruiser Squadrons totalling 9 ships, 3 destroyer flotillas totalling 26 destroyers under a Rear-Admiral in a cruiser, 8 submarines and 12 motor torpedo boats—a new class of warship—with their complement of auxiliaries.

These two fleets in reality form a central reserve whose sphere of operations on the outbreak of war cannot be precisely indicated beforehand, since it would depend upon the identity of the enemy and the general international situation. The greater part of both fleets might, in one war, be required in the areas which are actually at present their peace stations ; but at least half the main fleet might equally probably, in another war, be required to operate at the other side of the world ; and in a third, it might be necessary to maintain fleets in two hemispheres.

### *The Fleet Air Arm*

When the Royal Flying Corps was originally formed in 1912 it was designed to be a flying corps to co-operate with both of the older fighting services, with a common training school, common supply, and a military and naval wing. Not many months passed before such a plan showed itself to be unworkable, and the Royal Naval Air Service was divorced from the Royal Flying Corps, which became a part of the Army.

During the major portion of the war the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps continued to operate as integral branches of their respective parent Services, but the increasing possibilities of concentrated air power in the conditions which then obtained compelled the Cabinet of the day to decide that the best use would be made of the new potentialities of air warfare if the two flying branches of Naval and Military Services were amalgamated into a single Air Force, and so, in April, 1918, the Royal Air Force came into being.

The foundations for the change had already been laid because

the necessities of war had forced an amalgamation of the services of supply in order to make the best use of the available resources of the country. The change made little difference to the operations of the units themselves, the former Naval Air Service units continuing under the control of the Admiralty, while the Royal Air Force units acted, as before, under the Commanders-in-Chief of the British land forces in the various theatres of war.

After the war, however, the fusion introduced certain difficulties. The Royal Air Force, like the other fighting services, was greatly reduced and the money available was insufficient to enable the Air Ministry to satisfy the fighting needs of both services while attempting to carry out the fresh responsibilities which fighting in a new medium had forced it to assume. The Navy and the Army were therefore insufficiently provided with the air power which they needed to fulfil their own responsibilities.

The position was, perhaps, more difficult for the Navy than for the Army since the flying problems associated with the sea service were more strange to the personnel of the Air Force than was overland flying. Officers remained too short a time on Fleet duties before they were transferred elsewhere. In 1923, therefore, the Admiralty undertook to provide the whole cost of the air units carried aboard His Majesty's ships as a charge on the Navy votes. It also provided from the general lists of naval officers the personnel to man these units to the extent of all the observers and 70 per cent. of the pilots. Thus came into being what has since been known as the Fleet Air Arm.

This arrangement resolved some of the difficulties of the problem, but by no means all. For various administrative reasons, too technical and detailed to expound here, the mixed régime worked badly. As soon, therefore, as the expansion of the Royal Air Force made it unnecessary for the Air Ministry to retain its somewhat shadowy lien on the units of the Fleet Air Arm, it became possible to abolish the dual control to which it had been subject.

In 1938, therefore, a government decision transferred the administrative control of the Fleet Air Arm to the Admiralty, and it will now become an integral part of the Royal Navy. The process of transfer will take at least another four years. It will continue to rely on the Air Ministry for technical supplies in the same manner as the Air Ministry relies on Army sources for the supply of its rifles, machine-guns, and ammunition. It should be noted that the Fleet Air Arm consists only of the air units designed to be carried in His Majesty's ships, whether they are embarked or ashore. In addition to these units, shore-based



aircraft working over the sea will be required in naval warfare. It has been decided that these units shall continue to be furnished by the Royal Air Force, and they are not at present affected by the change in the status of the Fleet Air Arm. The Admiralty plan for the future of the Fleet Air Arm announced at the end of December, 1938, provides for an increase of personnel from the present figure of 3,000 to 10,000. The total of ship-borne aircraft will be increased to 740. All battleships and cruisers building and modernized are being equipped with catapults, and the total of 740 will include approximately 165 catapult planes. Flying-boats and other shore-based aircraft assigned to naval co-operation are not included, as these will remain under the control of the Air Ministry. Four aerodromes—Lee-on-Solent, Ford, Worthy Down, and Donibristle—are to be handed over to the Admiralty by the Air Ministry. The plan foreshadows the possibility of creating an 'air dockyard' at Lee, and also the construction of more naval-controlled aerodromes at home and abroad.

Modern war is of so complicated a nature that much of the action required of the fighting Services must be in the nature of combined operations. In such operations it is common to entrust the operational command to the predominant partner, and the application of this accepted principle will, it is hoped, provide satisfactorily for the various situations which may arise demanding the combined operations of Naval and Royal Air Force aircraft.

### *The Rôle, Strength, and Distribution of the Land Forces of the Empire*

The rôle of the British Army was defined by the Secretary of State for War when introducing the Army Estimates on March 10, 1938.<sup>1</sup> 'The rôle of the British Army', he said, 'is known to comprise a number of different purposes, but in the view of the Government it is now possible to classify them in order of importance'. He went on to say that 'the first purpose of our Army is home defence'. This he further subdivided into air defence, internal security, and coast defence, in that order of priority.

Although he did not stress the point, the calls on the Regular Army for service abroad are so heavy that for some years past it has been recognized that, without a very large increase to its home establishment, the Regular Army would be incapable of shouldering the greatly increased burden of home defence which the air menace has connoted. Consequently, the responsibility for the coast and air defences of the British Isles has, with the exception

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 332, cols. 2136-8. Introducing the Army Estimates for 1939, the Secretary of State more specifically reaffirmed this rôle.

of the defended ports in Ireland, passed to the Territorial Army. This is a very significant point ; the technique of both coast and anti-aircraft defence demands a high standard of intelligence on the part of those who undertake it, but, as the nature of the training is static, the conditions under which the guns are fought are very similar whether in peace or in war, since tactics and skill of manœuvre do not enter into the problem. A further reason for handing over these important duties to the Territorial Army is that their presence in the United Kingdom can always be counted on, whereas the units and formations of the Regular Army are always liable to be drawn upon to meet such overseas emergencies as have occurred almost continuously for the past twelve years in China, Egypt and Palestine. Thus arrives the somewhat paradoxical state of affairs in which the second-line troops are undertaking the first line of military defence in the United Kingdom. Actually, out of thirty-three Territorial Army divisions seven are allotted to the rôle of anti-aircraft defence.<sup>1</sup>

The Secretary of State did not enlarge on the internal security duties which he expected to be performed by both regulars and territorials, but he pointed out that there might be many ways in which organized forces could help the civil population in the event of air attack. There is no doubt that the presence of disciplined and properly organized military forces will act as a deterrent to panic and will help to maintain confidence and, therefore, order amongst a civil population to whom attack from the air will come as a sudden, a novel, and a very terrifying experience.

Second in classification to home defence the Secretary of State placed the discharge of British commitments overseas, including the garrisons of Egypt and Palestine and the defence of naval bases and ports on the trade routes. The size and types of the garrisons of these ports are based on the principle that, where communications are liable to be interrupted, the garrison should be maintained in peace at a strength adequate for its responsibilities of defence at the outbreak of war. Actually some 28 British regular battalions, in addition to some 40 batteries of artillery and 19 units of engineers<sup>2</sup> are normally stationed over-

<sup>1</sup> The original figures were announced by the Secretary of State for War on March 8, 1939, as 7 Anti-Aircraft and 13 Field Force divisions. On March 29 the Prime Minister announced that the Field Force would be increased by another 13 divisions. (These increases will not materialise for a year at least.)

<sup>2</sup> An infantry battalion on the Colonial Establishment numbers 24 officers and 700 other ranks.

A battery varies from 127 to 207 all ranks, according to the number of guns to be manned.

A fortress company of engineers varies from 240 to 260 all ranks, according to the number of defence searchlights to be manned.

seas, exclusive of the British garrisons in India and Burma, which absorb another 41 battalions of infantry and some 55 batteries of artillery.<sup>1</sup>

The final head in the Secretary of State's classification of the rôle of the British Army was that of the provision of a strategic reserve. The uses to which this reserve could be put were elaborated as follows : Firstly, it was available as a reinforcement, wherever required, for internal security, either in the United Kingdom or abroad. Secondly, it could be sent for the defence against external attack of overseas territories for which she might be responsible. Thirdly, it was to be available for co-operation in the defence of the territories of any allies she might have in case of war.<sup>2</sup> The strength and organization of the troops available for this reserve will be dealt with later. In point of numbers, the strength of the regular troops will be found to be not very formidable, but the main source of strength lies in the power of expansion given by the existence of the Territorial Army, a factor whose value is controlled largely by the amount of time that potential enemies may accord for such an expansion. The principle remains unchanged which was enunciated by the late Lord Haldane in the Memorandum introducing the Territorial Army into the defence system in 1907, where he stated that ' no military system will be satisfactory which does not contain powers of expansion outside the limit of the regular forces of the Crown '.

Put very shortly, the principle underlying the definition of the rôle of the British Army is that it concentrates on rendering the United Kingdom as secure as possible from attack, and that, so far as the oversea possessions of Great Britain are concerned, it must ensure their integrity in order to safeguard both purely local and also Imperial interests. Military aggression forms no part whatsoever of Army policy.

In considering the rôles of the various British garrisons abroad, it is probably better to deal with them on broad principles, since a detailed analysis of the strength and duties of each separate garrison would involve a mass of technical data and arguments.

India is by far the greatest charge on the military resources in man power. In allotting its resources to deal with India's military problems, the Government of India has an entirely free hand, and it is as well to state here that the War Office has no say, nor indeed does it want any, in the strength or distribution of the Army in India. The responsibility of the War Office is to find the British

<sup>1</sup> In his Estimates Speech on March 8, 1939, the Secretary of State for War announced the formation of a Strategic Reserve in the Middle East ; see p. 284 below.

<sup>2</sup> This was more categorically restated on March 8, 1939, to be available for employment in a European theatre.

quota of the Army in India of some 45,000 British soldiers, who, though they are provided by units of the British Army, are paid for out of Indian revenues. There is very close collaboration between the Commander-in-Chief in India and the War Office in Whitehall in the matter of ensuring similarity of the organization, equipment, and training of the troops in India with those in the United Kingdom, but it is recognized that the local conditions in India may demand departures from the British standard, of which the Government of India is the final arbiter.

Since India's assumption of full responsibility for her own defence enables her to maintain an army similar in all major respects to the British Army, and indeed containing important elements of the latter, the facilities for co-operation with Great Britain in war are probably greater than exist between Great Britain and the Dominions. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the Army in India is maintained for the defence of India and India alone. As has been pointed out already, the Army in India cannot be counted upon as an Imperial reserve, since its availability for service outside the Indian continent is entirely at the discretion of the government of that country.<sup>1</sup>

Closely bound up with the defence of India is the maintenance of the great strategic route from Great Britain through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal to the Indian Ocean and thence to the Far East, to Australia and to New Zealand. The loss of this line of communication would severely shake, if indeed it did not shatter, the foundation of the system of Imperial defence, that is to say, the ability to reinforce with men, materials, and food, any threatened portions of the Empire. For this reason are maintained naval bases and defended ports along this line, as already described. The protection of these ports as far east as and including Singapore, together with the garrisons of Palestine, Egypt and the Sudan, absorb some twenty-two battalions of British infantry<sup>2</sup> alone, to which must be added the units of artillery and engineers who man the fixed defences of the ports or form part of the mobile garrisons of the other localities held. These garrisons are calculated to be sufficiently strong to hold out during the 'period before relief', i.e. until reinforcements can reach them. They are also expected to be able to deal with any minor disturbances arising in their own area. Actually, the communal troubles in Palestine have necessitated the maintenance of a much stronger force in that country than was considered adequate in the more normal conditions which obtained four or five years ago.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 261 above.

<sup>2</sup> This excludes the reinforcements, amounting to thirteen battalions, now in Palestine.

These reinforcements have had to be drawn partly from the garrison of Malta and partly from the troops in Great Britain, India and Egypt. This goes to show that the normal garrisons in the Mediterranean basin are sufficient only so long as no major disturbances arise, which again emphasizes the importance of the principle that the foundation of Imperial Defence is the ability to reinforce the threatened point.

The importance of the Suez Canal in this line of communication is self-evident. Ever since 1882 its defence has been undertaken by the British army, and, in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, the right of Great Britain to assist the Egyptian army in its defence has been acknowledged as vital to the interests of the British Empire. In the crisis which arose over the Italo-Ethiopian war, Great Britain's first act was to reinforce the British garrison in Egypt to a strength which was considered adequate to withstand the first shock of a land invasion of Egypt from Libya. Had war ensued, a much stronger reinforcement would have been imperative, and it is probable that part at any rate of this would have come from the East. The danger of air attack on transports passing through the Mediterranean was no doubt assessed by the government, but a public pronouncement on this subject has never been made nor, indeed, would it be politic to make one. It, however, opens the door to discussion of the degree to which India, Australia and New Zealand consider themselves to be interested in the maintenance of the integrity of this particular link in their communications with Great Britain, and of the extent to which they are able to contribute in peace, and especially in war, towards its defence.

The defence of the Indian and Burmese ports on the Indian Ocean is the responsibility of their respective governments, but the British government undertakes the defence of Colombo, Trincomalee and Singapore, the defences of the first-named being manned by local volunteers. The importance of Singapore is referred to earlier in this section,<sup>1</sup> and the contribution which its development as a first-class naval base and defended port makes towards Imperial security has been acknowledged by the readiness with which Great Britain's financial burden has been shared by New Zealand, Hong Kong, and by Malaya itself.<sup>2</sup> The defences of this naval base are being organized so as to enable it to resist attack by a fleet comprising armoured vessels, the highest

<sup>1</sup> See p. 252 above.

<sup>2</sup> Contributions towards cost of the Singapore Base were made as follows: New Zealand, £1,000,000; Federated Malay States, £2,000,000; H.H. The Sultan and State of Johore, £500,000; Colony of Hong Kong, £250,000. *Total*, £3,750,000. Australia made no direct contribution, preferring to co-operate indirectly by an increase to the strength of the Royal Australian Navy.



scale of attack to which any defended port is considered to be liable. Here again its integrity is of such vital importance to the Eastern States of the Empire, that a promise of active co-operation in its defence in war would appear to be a liability which might well be undertaken by them in time of peace.

North-east of Singapore lies Hong Kong, a defended port whose function has already been discussed.<sup>1</sup> Its precise value in the scheme of Imperial Defence may be debatable, but its value as a safeguard to commercial interests in both North and South China is unquestionable. The real point to determine is the extent to which the effort put forth for its retention is, or will be, commensurate with the value of the trade involved. At the moment its garrison comprises ten batteries of artillery and four battalions of infantry, of which normally one belongs to the Indian Army. The situation in Shanghai at present demands the presence there of an extra British battalion. This has been supplied from Hong Kong, where it has been replaced by an extra Indian battalion. Without going into too much detail, it may be said that British interests in China have demanded the retention of two Indian and five British battalions in Hong Kong and North China, together with an important force of artillery. In the event of war against Japan, that country could not afford to ignore the fortress of Hong Kong, which provides a protected base to a British fleet operating against the flank of any Japanese movement towards Australia or New Zealand ; to this extent these Dominions have a real interest in the question of its defence.

The British garrisons in the Atlantic absorb one battalion of infantry, with very small detachments of other arms. Their inaccessibility to any naval Power with whom Great Britain is likely to be at war, and the proximity of the United States of America, justify the maintaining of defences of Jamaica and Bermuda on a low scale of preparedness. These would undoubtedly have to be increased in wartime, and provision would have to be made to render Freetown in Sierra Leone secure from raiding attack, so that cruisers could base themselves on properly defended ports when engaged in the task of keeping open the trade routes between Great Britain and the Americas.

It will be seen from the foregoing analysis of its commitments, that the British army normally stations outside the British Isles some sixty-nine battalions of infantry and approximately eighty-five batteries of artillery in addition to cavalry and engineer units and administrative services. In round numbers this force amounts to just over 108,000 officers and men, of whom some 45,000 are stationed in India. The contribution in terms of man power is

<sup>1</sup> See p. 248 above.

wholly disproportionate to the areas which have to be guarded and to the immense size of their combined populations, but it is nevertheless the determining factor in the assessing of the total strength of the British Regular Army. The units abroad have to be maintained at their proper strengths by annual drafts from home which replace time-expired men and casualties due to other causes. Under the Cardwell System, this involves the maintenance in Great Britain of approximately one unit for every unit serving overseas. So far as the infantry is concerned, this means that each two-battalion regiment of the line has one battalion in the British Isles and one stationed abroad ; the same principle applies to the other arms. In addition, there are maintained in the British Isles regimental depots and other training establishments whose functions are to train the recruit until he is fit to take his place in the ranks of his active unit.

The Army Estimates for 1939 provide for an establishment of 185,700 regular officers and men exclusive of the 47,000<sup>1</sup> British soldiers employed in India and Burma, so that the total man power of the British Regular Army is about 232,700 men, including 9,500 Colonial and Indian troops employed imperially. Of this total 108,000 are normally stationed abroad. Of the 124,000 who ought normally to be stationed in the British Isles, an appreciable proportion are recruits or men with less than one year's service ; from these the Strategic Reserve in the United Kingdom is organized.<sup>2</sup> Behind these active forces there are some 139,000 regular and 35,000 supplementary reservists whose numbers are expected to increase during 1939 to a combined figure of about 191,000. For the mobilization and maintenance under war conditions of the Strategic Reserve, there will, therefore, be an establishment of some 315,000 trained men available.<sup>3</sup> This compares with a figure of 350,000 in 1914, which shows that the Strategic Reserve, from the point of view of numbers alone, will inevitably be weaker than in 1914.<sup>4</sup> The Secretary of State for War, in his speech on March 8, 1939, announced an important change in policy as to the location of the Strategic Reserves. He said : ' In the current year the nucleus of an additional Strategic Reserve in the Middle East was formed, at present included in the two divisions stationed in Palestine. . . . The Middle East Reserve was a separate force, freed from the

<sup>1</sup> The figures for India and Burma are, respectively, 45,000 and nearly 2,000 ; India is now separated from Burma.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. Paper 5681 of 1938.

<sup>3</sup> This assumes that the establishments can be maintained at full strength. Past experience in fact shows that there is little likelihood of peace establishments being filled. Recent improvements in the recruiting situation have by no means overtaken the run-out of time-expired men.

<sup>4</sup> See *Military Operations, France and Belgium*, 1914, Vol. II, p. 3.

necessity of drawing on our home resources. It would have its own reserves and be held for use anywhere within the radius of our interests in that part of the world'.

The Territorial Army on January 1, 1939, numbered nearly 204,000 officers and men. It has since been reorganized into 33 divisions, of which seven (with an as yet unattained strength of 120,000 men) are allotted to the anti-aircraft defence of the British Isles. Exclusive of units allotted to coast defence duties, the remaining 26 Divisions are available for service overseas and constitute the first reinforcement to the Strategic Reserve. Owing, however, to the restricted nature of the training which these troops undergo in peace, as also to the necessity for incorporating a large number of recruits before they are strong enough and fit to take the field, these divisions cannot be counted on to intervene in battle for a considerable period after mobilization takes place.

Great Britain's military contribution towards defence may therefore be summarized as follows. Recognizing the supreme importance of protecting the heart of the Empire, some 120,000 Territorial troops are earmarked for the defence of the British Isles from sea-borne and air attack. Some 108,000 regular soldiers are allocated to the defence of oversea territories and defended ports, and a Strategic Reserve is maintained in Great Britain which is capable of producing a field force, measured in terms of the formations which were familiar in the Great War, of six regular divisions which can, some time after war breaks out, be reinforced by twenty-six divisions of the Territorial Army.<sup>1</sup> The actual size and composition of these divisions is undergoing a change, but for purposes of comparison with both Dominion and Foreign armies, the old organization is here retained.

So far as the other nations in the Empire are concerned, India alone compares with Great Britain in the size of its Regular Army, which is composed of the 45,000 British soldiers before mentioned and about 140,000 regular Indian soldiers. The great majority of these will be required for the defence of India itself, for even an external war has repercussions on the internal situation and on the North-West Frontier. But, if the Indian government felt disposed to collaborate by the despatch of a portion of their army overseas, and the analogy of the Great War be taken, it is doubtful whether in the first instance, such reinforcements would exceed one or two divisions.

The permanent forces of the remaining self-governing nations

<sup>1</sup> The Secretary of State for War (March 8, 1939) stated that the field force was now constituted in nineteen divisions, to be sent abroad in echelon with full equipment and maintenance as deployed; see also footnote 1 on p. 279 above.

hardly exceed 16,000 men in the aggregate, and, with the exception of the Irish army, these troops are mainly employed in training their confrères in their respective citizen forces. These forces are considerable in comparison to the populations from which they are drawn, but it would be idle to endeavour to elaborate here the possible or probable rôles in which they might be employed, since their participation in an 'Imperial' war can only be determined by their respective governments when such an occasion arises.

In the Great War Australia contributed 2 cavalry and 5 infantry divisions, Canada 4 divisions, New Zealand 1 mounted brigade and 1 division, and South Africa the equivalent of about 1 division. Indeed, from a study of the British Army List, it appears as if the organization of the various Dominion military forces was based on the supposition that contingents of these strengths might be made available for Imperial defence. Thus a contribution of thirteen divisions (apart from mounted troops) would probably be the maximum reinforcement to be expected from all the countries of the Commonwealth other than Great Britain, and, of these, only the two divisions from India would be immediately available. The causes which brought about the war and the theatre of operations would no doubt influence each country as to the extent, if any, of its contribution to a common effort.

In the foregoing review of the strength and rôle of the land forces of the Empire, the military contribution of Great Britain must not be measured in terms of man power alone. The provision of up-to-date armament in the fortresses as well as for the mobile troops, the increase in mobility and striking power made possible by the motorization and mechanization of the latter, and the provision of adequate reserves of ammunition, have considerably increased their potential value in war as compared with that of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. To produce this up-to-date army is costing the British taxpayer a very great deal of money, and it is not perhaps universally recognized that the ability of the government and industrial factories in Great Britain to produce these modern weapons and munitions in large quantities is one of the greatest assets which Great Britain brings to the balance sheet of Imperial defence.

### *The Rôle, Strength, and Distribution of the Royal Air Force*

At the beginning of the War in 1914 the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service consisted of little more than a handful of flying personnel with a variegated assortment of flying machines of elementary and often foreign types. The rôle allotted to them was essentially one of reconnaissance and they took the air on the outbreak of war unarmed.

Had the war been a brief clash of armies and fleets in movement, aviation might for long have remained no more than a handmaid to aid the Navy and Army in observation duties, but conditions soon forced on it other rôles. In land warfare the use of long-range guns necessitated air observation of the fall of shot ; the difficulties of keeping touch with troops in the conditions of the modern battle led to aircraft being used for contact patrols whose duty was to locate front lines ; long-range reconnaissances behind the enemy lines were supplemented by bombing missions.

In brief the Air Service was forced to intervene directly in land warfare. From a comparatively early date (1915) the bombing of railway junctions, munition dumps, billets, and other important points behind the enemy's lines became a part of the regular duties of the Air Services of both sides, and by 1917 co-operation with tanks, the dropping of smoke screens, and actual intervention in the battle with swarms of low-flying aeroplanes utilizing machine-gun fire had become common.

In naval warfare coastal and anti-submarine reconnaissance was supplemented by such work as spotting for ship *v.* shore bombardments, and the attack of submarines and other craft with guns and torpedoes.

It was not long before fighting in the air became common and naval and military airmen were engaged in intensive combats to obtain local mastery in the air in order to secure its use for British spotting, reconnaissance, and bombing planes while denying it to the enemy. Both Air Services were also closely and successfully engaged, in conjunction with anti-aircraft artillery, in defeating enemy air raids by Zeppelins, and by day and night flying aeroplanes.

By the end of the war the original handful of men and the few machines had grown to a force of 187 squadrons with 30,000 officers and 284,000 men. During the war-weariness which followed on the Armistice the Royal Air Force (which had been formed on April 1, 1918, by the amalgamation of the R.N.A.S. and R.F.C.) was ruthlessly cut down, reaching a low figure of 32 squadrons, of which 20 were stationed overseas. In spite of this, calls on its services increased. There were many theatres wherein to experiment with the new weapon provided by the aeroplane, which seemed as if it might be well adapted to assist in solving the problems confronting the administration in the outposts of the Empire. Thus a successful campaign in Somaliland in 1920 was followed by operations in the Sudan, in 'Iraq, in the Aden Protectorate and on the North-West Frontier of India.

Although there are opponents to the use of aircraft for purposes which may be described as semi-police control, there is a volume



of evidence that the Royal Air Force is capable of doing much to maintain peace and to restore order in the 'marches' of the Empire with economy and humanity. If the right to use it for these purposes is abandoned, it will only be because an effective and comprehensive ban on such use will automatically introduce similar restrictions in warfare between civilized nations, which will more than compensate for the loss of this effective border police weapon in uncivilized theatres.

Air forces have been used experimentally in aid of civil police for the maintenance of internal order. Experience in India (during the Amritsar disturbances in April, 1919), and in Palestine (where, after the Wailing Wall outbreak in 1929, it was found necessary to maintain infantry battalions and armoured car units in the country, and control was eventually transferred from the Air Ministry to the War Office) has clearly demonstrated that air forces are unsuitable for internal control purposes in countries having considerable urban populations.

Great Britain's present rearmament effort includes a considerable expansion and redistribution of her air strength, and while this fluid state of affairs continues, it is of little value to give detailed figures in this connexion.

Great Britain's main air effort is concentrated on the defence of the British Isles. The danger from air attack is so considerable and so well known that it is unnecessary to enlarge on it here, and it is therefore not surprising to find that out of the total strength of the Royal Air Force early in 1938, some three-quarters (about one-fifth of this on an auxiliary basis), are included in the so-called Metropolitan Air Force which exists for the defence of Great Britain. Included in the term 'defence' are those counter-bombing units which are necessary to throw the enemy back on to the defensive by attack on his bases and military establishments; without such action, local defence in the air would be ineffective. Great Britain has, in addition to these counter bombers, a number of squadrons of fighting aircraft disposed along the east and south coasts.

It is worth noting also that the Royal Air Force comprises no units at home affiliated to units abroad for drafting purposes. In fact, the unit policy has been very loosely pursued by the Air Ministry, and officers and men pass overseas and back home from unit to unit with little regard to associations of any particular character.

The Fleet Air Arm has recently been separated from the Royal Air Force and is, therefore, not dealt with here.<sup>1</sup> Its strength and establishment will be included in Naval Establish-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 276 above.

ments and its rôle is co-operation with the Fleet by means of aircraft carried in His Majesty's ships. Royal Air Force reconnaissance and bombing units based at home and abroad on shore bases may also co-operate with the Fleet for the protection of maritime traffic or for the attack of enemy vessels under the general control of naval commanders.

Abroad there are no units at Gibraltar because aerodrome accommodation is insufficient. At Malta there is an aerodrome at Hal Far,<sup>1</sup> and one squadron is based there which undertakes oversea reconnaissance. There are Royal Air Force squadrons in the Suez Canal zone whose rôle is to protect the Canal from attack and to ensure that the treaty obligations to Egypt are carried out. Aden, which in 1938 had one bomber squadron, is under the command of an Air Officer Commanding. This squadron would be responsible for assisting in the preservation of order in the hinterland and would serve to assist in the defence of, and discourage sea-borne attack on, the fortress.

In Palestine and Transjordan the air forces have varied with the exigencies of the local situation. At one time these territories were under the orders of an Air Officer Commanding, mainly for administrative purposes and for the convenience of the Colonial Office, but experience has proved that, under the conditions prevailing, the Air Force is not the most suitable instrument for maintaining internal order. The squadrons stationed in these territories in normal times have to protect the boundaries of Transjordan and Palestine from tribal attacks, to safeguard the pipe-line from Kirkuk in 'Iraq to Haifa and to exercise in general air control in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In 'Iraq five squadrons are stationed in fulfilment of treaty obligations<sup>2</sup> to that country, for the protection of the oilfields, for the general protection of the boundaries of the country from outside interference, for the control of the Persian Gulf and the protection of British air routes.

To India eight squadrons of the Royal Air Force are allotted at the request of, and at the cost of, the Government of India. They are concentrated towards the Frontier and are frequently in action to maintain peace among the tribes. They can be transferred in case of need to civil or military aerodromes nearer the coast.

An air base has just come into being at Singapore with reconnaissance and torpedo bomber squadrons for the protection of this focal point of maritime trade and important naval base.

All these imperial units may be looked upon as capable of being moved to assist each other in a local emergency. During the

<sup>1</sup> There is also a seaplane base at Kalafrana.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 157 above.

Afghan crisis of 1928-9, a squadron of heavy troop-carrying machines moved from 'Iraq to India, showing on a small scale what might be done in case of local emergency. In a general war, however, it is unlikely that any given area will be able to find it possible to spare squadrons in the early stages to reinforce its neighbours and certainly such assistance cannot be relied upon from the main depot of air strength in Great Britain.

The Dominions have been giving increased attention to air defence, and the late Prime Minister of Australia announced in March, 1938, that Australia would raise nine extra squadrons of the Australian Air Force, giving her a total of seventeen squadrons. Apart from acting, if the Commonwealth government should so decide, as a possible reserve for Singapore and the East in general, the Australian Air Force has a large part to play in the coastal defence of the long sea-board of Australia and in assisting in the escorting of shipping in Australian waters.

New Zealand has two squadrons in its air force, but expansion in air strength is now under consideration.

Canada maintains an air force of seventeen squadrons, of which nine are on a non-permanent basis : she was to raise this to twenty-two squadrons in 1938, of which twelve would be on a non-permanent basis. She has no near neighbour likely to become a danger to her. Canadians, however, appear to be notably ' air-minded ' and might provide a considerable recruiting field for Royal Air Force personnel.<sup>1</sup>

Officers are interchanged between the Dominion air forces and the Royal Air Force, and training is on common lines. In general the aircraft used are also of similar pattern, although Australia, and to some extent Canada, has bought American machines.

The outlying portions of the Empire—the Dominions possibly excepted—have normally the barest minimum of reconnaissance, bombing, and co-operation units sufficient only to deal with local disturbances or with small local scales of ground attack. The provisions against air attack in 1938 were so small that there was only one fighting squadron outside the British Isles, and that was in Egypt. The Army Field Force had the barest minimum of co-operation planes without either fighters or bombers. At the same time a Continental war would make the heaviest of calls on the ' Metropolitan ' squadrons, and few, if any, could be spared to reinforce distant threatened territories. This is a consideration of the gravest importance. There may be here an opportunity for co-operation, if it is offered, by the air forces of

<sup>1</sup> In July, 1938, Mr. Mackenzie King announced that the Canadian government had offered to provide facilities in Canada for training recruits to the Royal Air Force (see *The Times*, July 7, 1938).

Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, which might reinforce as necessary the meagre British air forces throughout the East by sending detachments and technical supplies across the Pacific. Trained personnel from the air forces of the Dominions might prove of inestimable value as a reinforcement to the Royal Air Force in any theatre of war.

### *Expenditure on Defence*

Early in 1937 His Majesty's Government in Great Britain, after reviewing the needs of the Navy, the Army and the Air Force to bring them into a state of readiness to meet the changed condition of world affairs, made this statement :

‘ It is not at present possible to determine what will be the peak year of defence expenditure ; that must depend upon circumstances which cannot at present be foreseen, and upon decisions to be taken in future years. Taking the programme as it stands to-day, however, it would be imprudent to contemplate a total expenditure on defence during the next five years of much less than £1,500 million ’.<sup>1</sup>

This figure compares with the aggregate of £1,575 million which had been spent on the defence services during the preceding eighteen years.<sup>2</sup> The position to-day is summed up in the statement relating to defence issued on February 15, 1939, which says :

‘ For some time past it has been evident that the borrowing powers conferred by the Defence Loans Act, 1937, would not suffice to meet the total cost of the programme, in so far as it could not be met from revenue. . . .

‘ His Majesty's Government are of opinion that it is necessary that . . . increased borrowing powers should be obtained forthwith, and they are accordingly asking Parliament to authorize the issue of a further £400 million (making in all £800 million), to be provided from borrowed moneys or from the Old Sinking Fund, towards the total cost of Defence Programmes authorized by Parliament during the five years April 1, 1937, to the March 31, 1942. The authority of Parliament is also asked to extend the scope of the services to which borrowed moneys may be appropriated in aid, so as to include Civil Defence ’.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 5374 of 1937, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Attlee in the House of Commons, November 12, 1936 (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 317, col. 1094.)

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 5944 of 1939, p. 2.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the House of Commons on February 20, 1939, summarized the figures contained in the statement, and gave the following figures for the distribution of expenditure in the years 1937-40 as between revenue and loans :

1937-8 :	£m.
Revenue . . . . .	200
Loans . . . . .	65
1938-9 (provisional figures) :	
Revenue . . . . .	274
Loans . . . . .	132
1939-40 (estimate) :	
Revenue . . . . .	230
Loans . . . . .	350

Thus, in the three years 1938-40, total defence expenditure was estimated at £1,250 million, £700 million from revenue and £550 million from loans. Of the borrowing powers conferred by the 1937 Act, £197 million had been used, and £203 million remained, while the programme would not be complete till 1942. Expenditure of civil defence, namely, Air Raid Precautions and the Essential Commodities Reserves Fund, had amounted to £3½ million in 1937 (A.R.P. only), and was estimated at £17¾ million for 1938 and £47 million for 1939.<sup>1</sup>

The estimates for 1938 included the following figures<sup>2</sup> :

Royal Navy . . . . .	£93,707,000	increase on 1937	£15,642,000
Army . . . . .	£86,041,000	„ „	£22,338,000
Royal Air Force . . . . .	£73,500,000	„ „	£17,000,000
Total . . . . .	<u>£253,248,000</u>	„ „	<u>£54,980,000</u>

The lowest figures for the three Services since 1919 were as follows :

Royal Navy . . . . .	£50,164,000 in 1932-3
Army . . . . .	£36,137,000 in 1932
Royal Air Force . . . . .	£9,400,000 in 1922-3 <sup>3</sup>

The immense rise in the figures of the Service Estimates over those of the 'slump' years is a measure both of the extent to which Great Britain had allowed herself to disarm at a time when she was trying to give the world a lead in limitation of armaments,

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 5944, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> H.C. 103 of 1938, *Financial Statement*. The total is exclusive of amounts, estimated at £90,000,000 to be met from issues under the Defence Loans Act, 1937, bringing the whole expenditure up to £343,248,000. The Army Vote given above includes Ordnance Factories.

<sup>3</sup> Source : *Economist Budget Supplements*.



and of the steady deterioration in international affairs during the past six or seven years.

In the last financial year, the proportion of defence expenditure to the total National Budget was 33 per cent., though it is true that some £132 million were financed from the Consolidated Fund under the Defence Loans Act of 1937.<sup>1</sup>

The total national expenditure for 1939-40 was estimated at the beginning of March, 1939 as £1,256,000,000. The grand total of the Army Estimates was £161,000,000; and the Navy Estimates provided for the spending of a total sum of £149,000,000. It was said in the statement on defence of February 15 that the Estimates for the three Defence Services together would amount to £523,000,000. From this it appeared at the beginning of March that the Air Estimates, not yet published, would amount to some £213,000,000. The total expenditure on Defence, including Civil Defence, was estimated at £580,000,000.<sup>1</sup> While £350,000,000 would be met by borrowing, the proportion of total expenditure on Defence to total national expenditure was 46 per cent.

In March, 1938, Australia adopted a three-year plan for bringing her defences into line with the requirements of the new political situation. The experiences of the Czech-German crisis led to a reconsideration of this plan, and in December the Minister for Defence introduced into the Australian House of Representatives a supplementary defence appropriation. A total projected expenditure of £63,000,000 by the end of the financial year 1940-1 was announced, representing an increase of £18,500,000 over the total projected earlier in the year.<sup>2</sup> The Navy Vote is to be increased from £15,933,000 to £20,548,000, the Army Vote from £11,612,000 to £19,704,000, the Air Force Vote from £12,512,000 to £16,444,000, and the Munitions Supply Vote from £3,057,000 to £4,855,000.

The average of the annual expenditure may therefore be struck at £21,000,000, which compares with a total central National Budget of £85,160,000 for the year 1937-8, of which nearly £6,000,000, or about 7 per cent., was spent on defence. Australia has not contributed towards the organization of the naval base at Singapore. Her corresponding contribution to Imperial Defence has taken the form of a modernization of the Commonwealth navy.

On March 24, 1938, the House of Commons in Ottawa discussed Defence Estimates which totalled \$34,000,000 (£6,800,000), a decrease of \$2,000,000, as compared with the 1937 Estimates.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, March 2, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, December 7, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *Canadian Estimates for the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 1939.*

On the other hand, the Estimates for 1936-7 were only \$23,400,000, so that the year 1937 saw a very large increase in defence expenditure. Defence expenditures amounting to \$63,435,075 (more than £13,000,000), were included in Canadian House of Commons Estimates for 1939-40.<sup>1</sup> The Air Estimates were more than doubled at \$29,775,565 as compared with \$12,000,000 in 1938. The total Naval Vote is \$8,500,000, an increase of \$1,860,768. For the Regular Army and Militia the total vote is \$20,775,600, an increase of \$4,048,580. The Defence Budget for 1939 represents 13 per cent. of the total national expenditure of \$457,241,215.

In 1936 New Zealand made the final instalment of the contribution promised some years ago towards the cost of the Singapore base. This contribution, spread over ten years, totalled one million pounds. In 1937-8 the expenditure on defence amounted to £1,599,797 net, which represented 4.6 per cent. of the national total expenditure of £34,427,000. In the budget presented to the New Zealand Parliament in July, 1938, the Estimates for defence amounted to £2,000,000; in addition £730,000 would be spent on defence department buildings.<sup>2</sup> The defence expenditure proper was 5.6 per cent. of a total national expenditure of £35,787,000.

The Estimates for the defence forces of the Union of South Africa totalled £1,666,090 for the financial year 1937-8. This represented 4½ per cent. of the total national budget estimate of £38,916,067. In September, 1938, the Minister for Defence announced that the government intended to spend £6,000,000 on armaments and coastal defences in the next three years, but this would be financed by loan funds, not out of revenue. Defence expenditure for 1938-9 financed in the ordinary way would amount to £1,797,530, which represented 4.2 per cent. of a total expenditure of £42,892,378.

The Indian Estimates for 1938 made provision for the expenditure of Rs.466,846,000 on defence. The budget figures during the past twenty years have fluctuated a great deal and have been influenced more by changes in the economic condition of the country than by variations in the international situation. The proportion of defence to total Central expenditure is high, but a true picture of the defence budget can only be obtained by correlating it to the combined total of the Central and Provincial budget estimates, since the Provinces bear no share of the expenditure on national defence.

<sup>1</sup> *Canadian Estimates for the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 1940.*

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times*, July 21, 1938.

In the financial year 1938-9 the expenditure on defence represents more than 38 per cent. of the gross Central budget.

For 1937-8 the figures were as follows :

Net Defence Expenditure (including Rs.142.25 lakhs to be transferred from the Defence Reserve Fund) .	Rs.460,407,000 ( about £34,500,000)
Total Expenditure of Central and Provincial Budgets .	Rs.2,030,915,000 (about £152,230,000)
Percentage of Defence to Total Expenditure . . . . .	22.6 per cent.

Important decisions on the question of Indian defence expenditure were announced by His Majesty's Government in September last.<sup>1</sup> It was proposed to increase the annual defence grant of £15,000,000 (which is made in accordance with the Garran Tribunal Award) by £500,000 from April 1, 1939 ; Parliament would be asked to authorize a capital grant up to £5,000,000 for the re-equipment of certain British and Indian units in India, and also to authorize the provision of aircraft to re-equip certain squadrons of the Royal Air Force. Four British battalions were to be transferred from the Indian to the Imperial establishment. Finally, an expert committee was to be sent to India to investigate on the spot the military and financial aspects of the problem of defence expenditure. The Expert Committee, of which the Chairman was Lord Chatfield, left for India in October.<sup>2</sup> Its investigations were completed early in 1939.

The great disparity between the sums spent by Great Britain and India on the one hand and by the Dominions on the other is, of course, due to the fact that the two former countries have to keep their defence forces in the very much greater state of readiness connoted by the maintenance of standing armies. At the same time it indicates that Great Britain is bearing a very large share of the financial burden involved in Imperial Defence. Whilst, perhaps, it may be contended that the greater proportion of this burden would have to be shouldered by her in any circumstances owing to her geographical position, nevertheless the fact remains that that portion of the expenditure which is necessitated by the policy of keeping Imperial communications open is of direct benefit to the Dominions. To that not inconsiderable extent it enables them to dispense with the much higher expenditure which would be involved by the maintenance of, at least, their land forces in a much greater state of readiness than is necessary at present.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, September 13, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, October 14 and October 27, 1938.



# INDEX

- Aaland Islands, remilitarization of, 89-90  
 Abdulla, Emir, importance of, 175; proclaims independence of Transjordan, 154  
 Aboukir Bay, battle of, 104  
 Abyssinia: British and French scheme for development and reorganization, 43; effect on Egypt of Italian conquest, 120, 122; Italian settlement in, 133; Italian invasion of, 48; Mafey Commission's Report, 40, 42, 183; not discussed at Stresa, 41; recognition of Italian conquest, 71; 72; *see also* Italo-Ethiopian war  
 Acre, battle of, 104  
 Addis Ababa, Marshal Badoglio's entrance into, 50  
 Aden, 247; British purchase of, 105; importance of, 161  
 Aden Protectorate, 165-166  
 Adriatic Sea, Italy's ability to 'close', 131  
 Aerial rearmament, British, 54  
 Afghanistan, 169-171; conflict of British and Russian interests in, 106; wars with India, 258  
 Afridis, the, 258  
 Aggression, main British deterrents to, 264  
 Air attack, accessibility of English industrial areas to, 4  
 Aircraft, military, British effort to secure abolition of, 33  
 Air Force, British, expansion of (1934), 34; 35; distribution and organization of, 6; *see also* Royal Air Force.  
 Air Force, German: announcement of recreation of, 37; claim for parity with Britain and France, 38  
 Air pact, Western, 37, 38, 54-55, 78-79  
 Air Power: effect on Imperial Defence, 263-267  
 Air routes, strategic aspect of, 268-269  
 Albania, Italian control of, 131; Italian invasion of, 131, 178  
 Alexandria, air route junction at, 267  
 Alexandria-Dhibban flight, 269  
 Algeria and Morocco, Italian minority in, 133  
 Almeria, German bombardment of, 64  
 Amau Declaration, the, 197, 220  
 American Independence, War of, 21-22  
 Amoy: return of concession to China, 218  
 Anglo-American Trade Agreement, 230  
 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty (1936), 118, 119-121  
 Anglo-French Entente, 23; effect on British naval policy, 9  
 Anglo-German Naval Agreement (1935), 10-11, 39  
 Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, 156, 168-169  
 Anglo-Irish Agreement (1938), 7  
 Anglo-Italian Agreement, 66-67, 71-72, 137; bearing on East Africa, 182-183; clauses relative to Middle East, 179; effect on Mediterranean situation, 246  
 Anglo-Japanese alliance: effect on British naval policy, 9; formation of, 215; termination of, 189-190  
 Anglo-Russian Convention (1907), 106  
 Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement (1921), 93  
 Anglo-Russian Trade Treaties (1930 and 1934), 96, 97  
*Anschluss*, the, 80; Italian opposition to, 31  
 Anti-Comintern Pact, 95; formation of, 69  
 Anti-Semitism: German pogrom (Nov. 1938), 88  
 Aqaba, Ibn Saud's claim to, 163; strategic importance of, 153  
 Aqaba-Maan region, 165; disputed claims for, 153  
 Arab Defence (Nashashibi) Party, formation of, 145  
 Arab Higher Committee, formation of, 145  
 Arabia: British forces in, 167; British interests in, 160-162; British relations with, 163-167  
 Arabian peninsula, political divisions of, 160  
 Arab Pact, 164  
 Arabs, 173-176; conflicting interests of, 175; Italian support of, 178; McMahon promises to, 138-139; relations with Jews, 144-151  
 Argentina, British trade with, 237, 238  
 Army Estimates (1939), 284; *see also* British Army.  
 Atlantic, defence of British garrisons in, 283  
 Atlantic Colonies, British trade with, 236  
 Atlantic Ocean: importance to Great Britain, 244-245  
 Australia: attitude towards Imperial Defence, 254-255; defence expenditure, 293; fear of Japanese southward expansion, 252  
 Australian Air Force, 290  
 Austrian independence: Anglo-French Declaration (1934), 77; British interest in, 76; end of, 80; Italian interest in, 77; Italy abandons defence of, 79  
 Austrian Succession, War of the, 21  
 Baghdad Railway, 155; source of Anglo-German friction, 106-107  
 Bahrein, Sheikdom of, 167



- Bahrein Islands, Iranian claim to, 167 ;  
 169 ; oil production in, 162  
 Baikal-Amur Railway, 202  
 Balance of Power, effect of Vienna Con-  
 gress on, 22 ; reasons for British  
 maintenance of, 19  
 Baldwin, Stanley: speech on Britain's  
 frontiers, 35-36  
 Balfour Declaration, 140 ; Arab denial  
 of validity of, 144  
 Baltic Sea, German naval predominance  
 in, 79  
 Barcelona, fall of, 68  
 Bari, anti-British radio propaganda from,  
 179  
 Basra, British air bases near, 157  
 Battle fleet, distribution and composition  
 of, 275-276  
 Battleships, function of, 272  
 Beira, 184  
 Belgium: British obligations to, 56 ;  
 change in foreign policy (1936-1937),  
 15-18 ; economic ties with Germany,  
 56 ; loyalty to League of Nations, 16-  
 17 ; neutrality, 12-14, 17 ; post-war  
 status, 14-15 ; rearmament, 16  
 Belligerent rights of Spanish combatants,  
 British refusal of, 62 ; divergent na-  
 tional views regarding, 65-66  
 Berehaven, naval anchorage of, 6, 7,  
 11  
 Berlin, postponement of British ministers'  
 visit to (1935), 37  
 Berlin Congress (1878), 104  
 Bermuda, 235 ; strategic position of, 245  
 Bizerta naval base, 135  
 Black Sea, neutralization of (1856), 104  
 Blockade, British weapon of, 264, 265  
 Boer War, 23  
 Bolivia, British imports of tin ore from,  
 237  
 Bombing, indiscriminate : proposed out-  
 lawry of, 54  
 Boxer indemnity, return to China of, 218  
 Brazil: British trade with, 237 ; 238  
 Briand-Kellogg Pact, 27  
 British Army: effect of Indian army on  
 mechanization of, 260 ; estimates  
 (1938), 292 ; rôle, 278-283 ; strength,  
 283-286 ; three purposes of, 5  
 British Isles, strategic unity of, 6-8  
 Brussels Conference, 221  
 Buenos Aires Conference (1936), 227  
 Burma, Chinese road towards, 212  
 Burma Defence Force, liability of, 258  
  
 Caliphate, restoration of, 176  
 Canada: attitude towards Imperial De-  
 fence, 255-256 ; conquest of, 21 ;  
 defence expenditure, 293-294 ; expec-  
 tation of U.S. naval protection, 253,  
 256  
 Canadian Air Force, 290  
 Cape, air route to the, 184-186  
 Cape Route, 183-184 ; need for con-  
 sideration of, 251  
 'Cape School' and 'Mediterranean  
 School' in British strategy, 127  
 Capitulations, 118, 119  
 Cardwell system, 284  
 Caribbean, the: commanding position of  
 U.S.A. in, 233  
 'Cash and Carry' principle, 232  
 Central European Pact, proposed, 78  
 Ceuta: proposed exchange for Gib-  
 raltar, 109-110  
 Chamberlain, Neville: Berchtesgaden,  
 85 ; Broadcast message to nation and  
 Empire, 87 ; Godesberg, 86 ; Munich,  
 87 ; letter to Sig. Mussolini (1937), 71  
 Chatfield, Lord: Expert Committee on  
 Indian defence expenditure, 295  
 Chauteemps and Delbos, MM.: visit to  
 London (1937), 70  
 Chile: British trade with, 237, 238  
 China: American policy towards, 203  
*et seq.* ; appeal to League of Nations,  
 220-221 ; Boxer rising (1900), 189 ;  
 British and American interests in, 225 ;  
 British garrisons in, 213 ; British trade  
 with, 210, 211 ; cause of Japanese  
 struggle with, 194 ; Japanese 'Twenty-  
 one Demands', 196 ; position of, 198-  
 200 ; potential danger to Japan, 188 ;  
 relations with Western Powers, 188-  
 189 ; trade with U.S.A., 205-206 ;  
*see also* Sino-Japanese War.  
 Chinese Eastern Railway, 201  
 Chinkiang: return of concession to  
 China, 218  
 Cisjordanian Arab State, 154  
 Civilians, air bombing of: proposed  
 international prevention, 266-267  
 Collective security: breakdown of, 53 ;  
 French plan for (1933), 30 ; German hos-  
 tility to in E. and Central Europe, 38  
 Colombo, defence of, 282  
 Colonies, British: dependence on Britain  
 for defence, 250  
 Committee of Imperial Defence: diffi-  
 culties of concerting plans, 257 ;  
 Dominions' collaboration, 253  
 Convoy system at sea, 274  
 Cork Harbour defences, 7  
 Cruiser squadrons, distribution of, 275  
 Cyprus, British acquisition of, 104 ; status  
 of, 114 ; strategic value of, 114-116  
 Czechoslovakia, British policy regarding,  
 81-87 ; French alliance with, 25 ;  
 French guarantee reaffirmed, 71  
  
 Daladier and Bonnet, MM.: visit to  
 London (April 1938), 70-71 ; visit to  
 London (Sept. 1938), 85  
 Danzig, abdication of British interest in  
 status of, 80  
 Dardanelles, status of, 137-138  
 Dar-es-Salaam, 184  
 Darwin naval base, development of, 247  
 Dawes Conference (1924), 26  
 December Memorandum (1926), 218  
 Defence, expenditure on, 291-295  
*Deutschland*, the: bombing of, 64  
 Dhibban air base, 158  
 Disarmament: British memorandum  
 (1934), 33 ; divergent British and  
 French views, 27-28, 34-35 ; French  
 memorandum (1934), 34 ; German  
 attitude, 28-32 ; plan for two stages  
 in, 32

- Disarmament Conference, 28-32  
Dodecanese Islands: Italian possession recognized, 130  
Dollfuss, Engelbert, murder of, 35, 77  
Dominions: air forces, 290-291; attitude towards Imperial Defence, 253-256; effect of Air power on defence problems, 266; inclusion of naval forces in Royal Navy's quotas, 257; military strength of, 286; responsibility for own defence, 249  
*Drang nach Osten*, 104  
Dumeirah, Italian acquisition of, 131  
Durban, 184
- East Africa, British territorial interests in, 182-183  
Eastern Europe: effect of Nazi Revolution on position of, 75; lack of British commitments in, 75  
Eastern Pact, German hostility to, 78-79  
Eastern Question, 22; prominent aspects of, 105  
East European Locarno agreements, French plan for extension of (1934), 77-78  
Eden, Anthony: resignation, 66, 71; visits to Berlin, Moscow, Warsaw, and Prague, 78; visit to Rome, 42  
Egypt: British commitments, 251; constitution, 117-118; declared a British protectorate, 108, 117; declared a sovereign State, 117; defence forces, 121-122; Italian minority, 133; part in British foreign policy, 116 *et seq.*; Treaty with Great Britain (1936), 118, 119-121  
Elders Colonial Airways, 185  
El Hasa, oil production in, 162  
English Channel, command of, 8  
Euphrates, British air bases W. of, 157  
Europe: division into opposing *blocs*, 32; main causes of British intervention in politics of, 19; methods of British intervention, 20; obstacles to British post-war policy in, 73; principles of British policy and strategy in, 4-5; strategic separation of Eastern and Western, 55
- Falkland Islands, 235; strategic position of, 245  
Famagusta: potential naval and air base, 113, 115  
Far East, 187 *et seq.*; Imperial Defence problems in, 252  
Far Eastern area, Soviet programme in, 202  
Feisul: elected King of 'Iraq, 156  
Five Power Treaty (1922), 190; 191; 192; 207-208  
Fleet Air Arm, the, 276-278  
Foreign Enlistment Act, enforcement of, 64  
Foreign nationals in Spain: efforts to secure withdrawal, 66-68; Italian withdrawal of 10,000 troops, 72; withdrawals on each side, 68
- Four Power Pact, Mussolini's proposal of (1933), 30-31  
Four Power Treaty (1921), 190  
France, British naval agreement with (1912), 23; British obligations to, 56; British post-war attitude towards, 73; British relations with in nineteenth century, 22-23; danger of Spanish Civil War to, 58-59; dominant European power, 73; eastern frontier, British and American refusal to guarantee, 25; economic dominance of (1931), 28; estrangement with Great Britain (1919-1925), 25-27; Mediterranean interests, 134-135, 246; Middle and Near Eastern interests, 180-181; policy in search of security, 73-74; policy regarding Belgium, 14-18; post-war hegemony in Europe, 28; post-war policy of, 24-27; rapprochement with Italy (1935), 36; value as British ally in Mediterranean, 127-128  
Franco, General: accredited British agents appointed to, 68-69; recognition of his government by Germany and Italy, 63  
Franco-British *communiqué* (Feb. 1935), 36-37; German reply to, 37  
Franco-Czechoslovak Pact of Mutual Assistance, 83  
Franco-Italian Agreement (1935), 131  
Franco-Lebanese treaty, 180  
Franco-Soviet pact, 38-39; German concern with, 54-55; possible adherence of Turkey, 135; ratification by France, 55  
Franco-Syrian treaty, 135, 180  
Freedom of the Seas: U.S. policy, 230-233  
Freetown (Sierra Leone), 183; defence of, 283; likely importance of, 245
- Geneva Protocol, the, 26  
'Gentlemen's Agreement', Anglo-Italian, 137  
German re-armament: attitude of Powers to, 32-39  
Germany: ambitions in E. Europe, 75; attitude to disarmament, 28-32; failure to respect international obligations condemned by League Council (1935), 38; growing distrust of after repudiation of Locarno Pact, 55-56; guarantee of Belgium neutrality (1937), 17; naval rearmament, 10-11; offer of ten-year non-aggression pact with France, 33; proposals for European settlement (1936), 57; relations with U.S.S.R., 98  
Gibraltar, effect of General Franco's victory on strategic value of, 128; English seizure of, 102; 108; facilities as naval base, 109; insufficient aerodrome accommodation, 289; potential untenability of, 127; 128; vulnerability of, 109-110; 251  
Godesberg demands, Czech rejection of, 86

- Great Britain: commercial value of Panama Canal, 234-235; defence estimates (1939-40), 293; defence expenditure, 291-293; defence problem 243 *et seq.*; effect of geographical position upon political and strategic principles, 4-5; Far Eastern interests, 209-212; Far Eastern policy, 214-223; financial and commercial relations with U.S.A., 228-230; forces in Far East, 212-214; interest in Belgium independence, 13; interests in 'Iraq, 155-156; Mediterranean interests, 100 *et seq.*; Middle and Near Eastern interests, 181-182; note to Japan, 222; policy towards China, 199-200; position in the Atlantic, 233-236; principles of E. European policy, 75-76; principles of European policy, 250; protest against Mexican oil expropriations, 239; relations with U.S.A., 224-226; relations with U.S.S.R., 96-99; supremacy in nineteenth century, 22; trade with Atlantic colonies, 236
- Great War, the: British rôle in, 23-24
- Hadhramaut, the: British position in, 166
- Haifa pipe-line, 156; importance of, 130
- Hainan: Japanese designs on, 212
- Halifax, Lord: visit to Germany (1937), 70
- Halifax, Royal Canadian Navy base at, 245
- Hankow: return of concession to China, 218
- Hejaz, the: conquest by Ibn Saud, 163
- Hejaz Railway, ownership and control of, 163-164
- Heligoland, cession of to Germany, 8; demolition of fortifications, 9; re-fortifying of, 11
- Hitler, Adolf: conversation with Mr. Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden, 85; Godesberg, 86; Munich settlement, 87; speech at Nuremberg Party Rally (1938), 84-85
- Hoare, Sir Samuel: assertion of Britain's adherence to League principles, 48
- Hoare-Laval plan, 52-53
- Holy Places in Palestine, 143
- Home Defence, 5-6
- Home Fleet, composition of, 276
- Hong Kong, defence of, 283; importance to Great Britain, 210-211; naval base, 213-214; strategic disadvantages of, 248
- Hope Simpson Commission, 147
- Ibn Saud: conquest of the Hejaz, 163; pacts with Arab neighbours, 174; relations with Great Britain, 175-176
- Imperial Air Routes, 267-270
- Imperial Airways: Cape air route, 185
- Imperial Defence: Dominions' attitude, 253-256; India's part, 262-263; political factors, 249-253; problem of, 243-249
- India, conquest of, 21; defence estimates, 261-262; defence expenditure, 294-295; defence forces and supply, 259-260; defence problems, 251-252; 257-263; hypothesis of Russo-Afghan invasion, 171; part in Imperial Defence, 262-263; R.A.F. squadrons in, 289; responsibilities of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, 261; responsibility for own defence, 249
- Indian Army, responsibility for and function of, 280-281; strength of, 285
- Indian Ocean: a British lake, 247
- Indian Transcontinental Airways, 267
- International police force, French advocacy of, 27
- Ionian Islands: British surrender to Greece, 104
- Iran, 167-169; claim to Bahrein Islands, 167, 169
- 'Iraq, 155-159; British commitments with, 251; British forces in, 157-159; independence of, 156; 157; R.A.F. squadrons in, 289; relations with Saudi Arabia, 164; 'Transferred Territories', 156
- 'Iraq Petroleum Company, 156
- Ireland: British control of coastal defences, 7; defence forces, 256; importance to Great Britain, 6; strategic importance to Great Britain, 256
- Iron ore, Swedish export of, 90-91
- Ismailia-Darwin flight, 269
- Italian East Africa, mineral wealth of, 133
- Italo-Ethiopian war, 40-53; British and other efforts for conciliation, 51-53; British policy towards, 44; League Committee of Five's proposal, 43; U.S. policy towards, 231
- Italy: anti-British press campaign, 41, 44; claims against France, 88; conversations with Britain over Abyssinian interests suggested, 41; factors in potential war with, 127-129; interest in Suez Canal, 124; Mediterranean interests, 130-134, 246; position in Middle East, 177-180; rapprochement with France (1935), 36
- Jamaica, defence of, 283; strategic position of, 245
- Japan, aggressiveness of, 190; British Empire trade with, 210; economic importance to U.S.A., 205; growth of population, 192; possible intervention in Philippines, 209; post-war policy of, 192-198; power of military over civil authority, 193; Spratley Islands annexed by, 209; strategic strength in Far East, 188; *see also* Sino-Japanese War.
- Jewish Agency, creation of, 145
- Jewish immigration into Palestine, 147-148
- Jewish National Home, policy of, 143-144

- Jews: future of in Middle East, 176-177;  
German pogrom against, 88; public  
whipping of in Libya, 178  
Jiddah, Treaty of (1927), 163, 165
- Karouba air base, 135  
Khaniqin Company, 156  
Kiao-Chao, 196  
Kiel Canal, status of, 9-10, 11  
Kilindini, 184  
Kiukiang: return of concession to China,  
218  
Korea, Japanese seizure of, 194  
Kowloon, dock accommodation in, 213  
Kurile Islands, 195-196  
Kustchuk-Kainaidji, Treaty of, 103  
Kuwait, Sultanate of, 167; commercial  
struggle with Saudi Arabia, 176;  
relations with Saudi Arabia, 165
- Labour Party: demand for sanctions  
against Italy, 47  
La Hogue, battle of (1692), 102  
Larnaca aerodrome, 116  
Latin-American Republics, change in  
U.S. policy towards, 227  
Lausanne, Treaty of (1923), 137  
Laval-Hoare plan, 52-53  
League of Nations: Advisory Com-  
mittee's resolution on Sino-Japanese  
war, 221; Afghanistan admitted, 171;  
attitude towards Manchurian question,  
218-219; Belgian attitude, 16-17;  
British part in establishment of, 24;  
complete European membership hoped  
for (1936), 57; condemnation of Ger-  
many's failure to respect international  
obligations (1935), 38; entry of  
U.S.S.R., 35, 78, 95; Germany  
admitted, 27; Germany's with-  
drawal, 32; 'Iraq admitted, 156;  
Italo-Ethiopian war, 40-53; Italy's  
withdrawal, 69; Middle Eastern  
members, 172; Sir S. Hoare's asser-  
tion of British loyalty to, 48; U.S.S.R.  
admitted, 95  
Lebanon, the: French treaty with, 135,  
180  
*Leipzig*, the: alleged attack on, 65  
Leith Ross Mission, 211; 220  
Libya: colonization of (1938), 133; Italian  
forces in, 132; potential base of attack  
upon Egypt, 120  
'Lima, Declaration of', 227-228  
Limassol: potential sea-plane station,  
115  
Locarno Pact, 26-27; Belgium released  
from obligations under, 16; collapse  
of, 55; Germany's repudiation, 15;  
limitation of British commitments, 30  
London: vulnerability to air attack, 3  
London Declaration on collective security  
in the air, 54, 78  
London Naval Conference (1930), 27-28  
London Naval Conference (1935-6):  
Japanese withdrawal, 191  
London Naval Treaty (1936): Italian  
adherence, 137  
Lough Swilly, naval anchorage of, 6,  
7, 11
- Lourenço Marques, 184  
Low Countries, independence of, 12
- Maan-Aqaba district, 165; disputed  
claims for, 153  
Mackenzie, Ian: review of Canadian  
defence policy, 256  
McMahon Promises to Arabs, 135-139;  
Arab view of, 144  
Maffey Commission's Report on Abyss-  
sinia, 40, 42; Italian view of, 183  
Mahsuds, 258  
Malacca Straits, 247, 253  
Malaya, British: source of primary  
products, 211  
Malta, capture of, 103; government of,  
111-112; Hal Far aerodrome, 289;  
strategic position of, 112; vulner-  
ability to air attack, 251  
Manchukuo: Russian border incidents,  
201  
Manchuria, Russian designs on, 215;  
Japanese seizure of, 191, 193, 194,  
218-220  
Maritime Customs Administration, 222-  
223  
Mediterranean: Anglo-Italian Agree-  
ment (1937), 59; British interests,  
100 *et seq.*; British naval forces  
strengthened (1935), 44-45; British  
position in, 125-130; conflict of in-  
terests in, 124 *et seq.*; importance to  
British Empire, 245-247; submarine  
attacks on merchant shipping, 66  
Mediterranean basin, sufficiency of  
British garrisons in, 282  
Mediterranean Fleet, composition of,  
276; constitution of, 113  
Mehemet Ali, 105  
Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Muni-  
tions to Spain) Act, 61  
Mers-el-Kebir air and naval station, 135  
Mesopotamia, German sphere of influ-  
ence in, 107  
Mexican Eagle Company, the, 239  
Mexico, British interests in, 238-239  
Middle East, British interests in, 100 *et  
seq.*; conflict of interests in, 171 *et  
seq.*; Italian propaganda in, 178  
Middle Eastern Pact (1937), 172  
Milner Mission to Egypt (1919), 117  
Minorca, loss of, 103  
Minorities, Italian: in the Mediterranean,  
133  
Missionaries, American: in China, 203  
Mohmands, the, 258  
Mongolia, Inner: Japanese foothold in,  
201  
Mongolia, Outer: Russian domination of,  
201, 203  
Monroe Doctrine, the, 226-228  
Montreux Convention (1937), 119  
Montreux Straits Convention (1936),  
137-138; adherence of Italy, 137  
'Mukden Incident', the, 196  
Munich settlement, 87; American views  
of, 227  
Mussolini, Benito: part in Munich  
settlement, 87; presentation with  
'the Sword of Islam', 177, 178;  
Protector of Islam, 133



- Nanking: centre of Chinese National Government, 218  
 Napoleonic Wars, 22  
 Nationalities Statute (Czechoslovakia), 83  
 Naval blockade, effect of U.S. policy on, 230-231  
 Naval patrol of Spanish coasts: discontinuance of original scheme, 66; German and Italian withdrawals, 64-65  
 Naval policy, British: effect of Anglo-French *entente*, 9; effect of German naval power, 8-9; effect of Japanese alliance, 9  
 Naval strength, British: determining factors, 271-273  
 Nazi Party, foreign policy of, 75  
 Nazi policy and British home defence, 251  
 Neurath, Baron von: invitation to London, 70  
 Neutrality: effect on Imperial air routes, 268, 269-270; logical consequences of enforcement by Dominions, 257; U.S. policy, 230-233  
 Neutrality Act (1935), 231; re-enactment of (1936), 232  
 Neutrality Act (1937), 232-233  
 Newfoundland, 235  
 New Zealand: attitude towards Imperial Defence, 255; defence expenditure, 294; fear of Japanese southward expansion, 252  
 New Zealand Air Force, 290  
 Nile, Battle of the, 103  
 Nine Power Treaty (1922), 191, 204, 217, 221  
 Non-Intervention Committee, 62-68; German and Italian withdrawal from and rejoining of, 64-65  
 Non-intervention in Spain, British plan for, 65; British execution of, 61-69; French initiation of policy of, 61  
 North Sea, command of, 9, 10  
 Nyon Conference, 66, 135-137
- Oil: French dependence upon 'Iraqi supplies, 181; Iranian production, 168; 'Iraqi resources, 156; Venezuelan exports, 237  
 Oil companies in Mexico, 238-239  
 Oil embargo: question of application to Italy, 49-50, 52, 53  
 Oman and Muscat, Sultanate of, 166  
 'Open Door', American protest against violations of, 221
- Pacific Ocean, problems of Imperial Defence in, 248  
 Palestine, air forces in, 289; Arab attitude, 174-175; Arabs and Jews in, 144-151; British forces in, 151-152; British interests in, 142-144, 181-182; disturbances, 146, 148-149, 150, 152; Hope Simpson Commission, 147; Jewish immigration, 147-148; London Conference (1939), 151, 176-177; MacDonald Letter, 147, 149; Middle East and partition policy, 172-173; Peel Commission, 148, 149-150, 154; proposed partition, 150, 151; responsibilities of British mandate, 146; Shaw Commission, 147, 149, 152; Woodhead Commission, 150-151  
 Pan-Arab federation, 176  
 Pan-Arab movement, 173  
 Panama Canal, 234-235  
 Pan-American Conference (1938), 227-228  
 Pan-American Convention on Conciliation and Arbitration, 227  
*Panay*, the, 204  
 Pan-Islamic movement: unlikely in Middle East, 172  
 Pantelleria, Italian fortification of, 112-113  
 Paris, Treaty of (1856), 104  
 Peace Conference (1919), British policy at, 24  
 Peel Commission, 148, 149-150, 154  
 Perim, 161  
 Persia: division of into three spheres of influence, 106  
 Persian Gulf: British naval bases and airports in, 162; principalities of the, 160; Russian advance towards, 106  
 Philippines, the: place in U.S. Far Eastern policy, 208-209; trade with U.S.A., 206  
 Piracy: outbreak in Mediterranean (1937), 135-136  
 Poland, French alliance with, 25  
 Port Jackson (Sydney), naval base at, 248  
 Port Mahon, English acquisition of, 102  
 Porto Vecchio submarine base, 134-135  
 Portugal, English alliance with (1654), 102  
 Propaganda, German and Italian: effect in Arab countries, 179
- Qatar, Sheikdom of, 167  
 Queenstown naval anchorage, 6, 11  
*Questionnaire* to Germany, British, 58, 81
- Rearmament, British: German resentment of published reasons for, 37; reasons for, 250  
 Reparations: Dawes Conference, 26; Franco-British disagreement, 25-26  
 Revisionists, Jewish, 145  
 Rhineland: demilitarization of, 25; German reoccupation of, 50, 53, 55; proposed independent republic, 24-25  
 Rhodesian and Nyasaland Airways, 185  
 Rome Agreement (Jan. 1935), 78  
 Rome-Berlin Axis, first appearance of, 58; proclamation of, 69  
 Royal Air Force: estimates (1938), 292; disposition of in Egypt, 121; rôle, 286-288; strength and distribution, 289-290  
 Royal Indian Navy, 262, 263



- Royal Navy: estimates (1938), 292; peace distribution, 275-276; rôle, 271; strength, 271-274; war distribution, 274-275
- Ruhr basin, French occupation of, 25-27
- Runciman, Lord: mission of mediation in Czechoslovakia, 84; report to Cabinet, 85
- Russia, British convention with (1907), 23; *see also* U.S.S.R.
- Saar plebiscite, 36
- Sanctions against Italy: abandoned, 50-51; British government view, 46; 47; effect of failure, 53; imposed, 49; Labour Party demand for, 47
- Saudi Arabia, 160; British interests in, 181; independence of, 163
- Saudi-Iraqi frontier problem, 164
- Saudi-Iraqi treaty of alliance, 157, 174
- Saudi-Yemeni treaty, 174
- Scandinavia, British relations with, 88-91; modification of policy, 89-90
- Schlieffen plan, 13
- Seven Years' War (1756-63), 21
- Shanghai, British investments in, 211
- Shanghai International Settlement: admission of Chinese to Council, 218
- Shaw Commission, 147, 149, 152
- Shipping, protection of British, 62
- Siegfried Line, 83
- Simon, Sir John: visit to Berlin, 78
- Simonstown, 183-184; importance as naval base, 247
- Singapore air base, 289
- Singapore naval base, 187-188, 213-214; approaching completion of, 252; defences of, 282-283; remoteness of, 248
- Sinkiang, Russian domination in, 201; 202
- Sino-Japanese War: American attitude, 205; China's appeal to League of Nations, 220-221; probable results of Japanese or Chinese victory, 200
- Socotra, 161
- Somaliland, British: partial cession to Italy proposed, 42
- South Africa, Union of: attitude towards Imperial Defence, 255; defence expenditure, 294; interest in East Africa, 182
- South African Airways, 186
- South America, British economic interests in, 236-238
- Southern Pacific, possibilities of Japanese expansion in, 194-195
- Soviet-Manchukuo frontier: defences and fortifications, 202
- Spain: British ban on export of arms to, 61; British interest in integrity of, 59; Italy's future position in, 134; outbreak of Civil War, 58; *see also* Non-intervention; Spanish Civil War.
- Spanish Armada (1588), results of defeat of, 20
- Spanish Civil War: dangers of foreign intervention, 58; 60; frontier and coastal observation by Britain, France, Germany and Italy, 63-64; German intervention, 63; Italian intervention, 64; 133-134; policy of non-intervention, 58-69; possible menace to Britain in Mediterranean, 251
- Spanish Succession, War of the, 21
- Spratley Islands: annexed by Japan, 209
- Stalin: defeat of Trotsky, 94
- 'Status quo area' in Far East, 213
- Stimson, H. L.: views on China, 195-199
- Strategic Reserve, British, 280 *fn.*, 284
- Stresa Pact (1935), 38; French anxiety to avoid breakdown of, 43
- Submarine warfare: effectiveness in Mediterranean, 107-108, 126
- Sudan: obstacle to Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, 118; reconquest of, 105; status of, 119; strategic importance to British Empire, 118-119
- Sudeten Germans: negotiations with Czech government, 83
- Sudetenland, disorders in, 85
- Suez Canal, British dependence upon, 129-130; Company, 122; defence of, 282; economic and political importance of, 125; Great Britain chief shareholder in, 105; part in Italian policy, 124; question of closure of, 123; status, 123; zone defined, 121
- 'Sword of Islam, the': presentation to Sig. Mussolini, 177; 178
- Sykes-Picot Agreement, 139
- Syria: cause of Arab anti-French feeling, 176; French treaty with, 135; 180
- 'Syrian question, the', 105
- Takoridi (Gold Coast), 183
- Tana, Lake: Italian assurance of respect for British rights, 44
- Tangier, English acquisition and abandonment of, 102
- Territorial Army: responsibility for coast and air defences, 278-279; strength, 285
- Thirty Years' War (1618-48), 20-21
- Three Power Treaty (1936), 191, 192
- Tientsin: reform of concession, 218
- Tobruk, port of, 132
- Transjordan: 152-155; air forces in, 289; defence forces, 154; frontier disputes with Saudi Arabia, 164-165; status, 154
- Trans-Iranian Railway, 168
- Trans-Siberian Railway, double-tracking of, 202; effect on British policy, 214-215
- Trincomalee (Ceylon), defence of, 282; increased importance of, 247
- Triple Alliance, the, 107
- Tripoli (Lebanon): potential naval base, 135
- Trotsky: defeat by Stalin, 94
- Trucial Sheikdoms, inland boundaries of, 164
- Tunisia, Italian minority in, 133
- Turkey: decision to join Central Powers, 108; end as a great Power, 103; English protection of, 104-105; relations with France, 135; relations with 'Iraq, 157; results of defeat of, 108
- Tydings-McDuffie Act, 208, 209

- U.S.A., 224 *et seq.* ; Far Eastern policy, 203-209 ; financial and commercial relations with Gt. Britain, 228-230 ; investments in Far East, 206-207 ; loan to China, 221
- U.S.S.R. : admission to League of Nations, 78, 95 ; attitude to non-intervention in Spain, 63 ; Far Eastern policy, 188 ; political, strategic, and economic position of, 91-99 ; position in Far East, 200-203 ; purges, 95, 98, 99 ; relations with Afghanistan, 171 ; relations with Britain, 96-99 ; relations with rest of world, 93-96
- Utrecht, Treaty of, 102
- Valetta, Grand Harbour of: vulnerability to air attack, 112
- Valona, Italian control of, 131
- Venezuela, British trade with, 237
- Versailles, Treaty of: causes of revolt against, 250 ; naval provisions of, 10
- Vienna Congress (1814-15), 22
- Vladivostok air and naval base, 201
- Walvis Bay, 183
- Wars, English: colonial and commercial causes of, 19 ; in 16th century, 20 ; in 17th century, 21 ; in 18th century, 21-22 ; in 19th century, 22-23 ; in 20th century, 23-24
- Washington Conference, the, 190-192, 216-217 ; effect of, 207
- Washington Treaty: effect on British naval strength, 273
- Wazirs, the, 258
- Weihaiwei: return to China, 218
- West Indies, strategic importance of British, 233 ; U.S. expansion in, 233
- 'Wet triangle', 9 ; 11
- Wilson, Sir Horace: mission to Herr Hitler (Sept. 1938), 86-87
- Wilson Airways, 185
- Woodhead Commission, 150-151
- Yemen, the, 160 ; friction with Great Britain, 165 ; Italian interests in, 177
- Yugoslavia, Italian peace pact with, 131
- Zaghlul Pasha: champion of Egyptian nationalism, 117
- Zionism, British support of, 140